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# ON ART AND ARTISTS

BY

MAX NORDAU

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TRANSLATED BY W. F. HARVEY, M.A.

LONDON

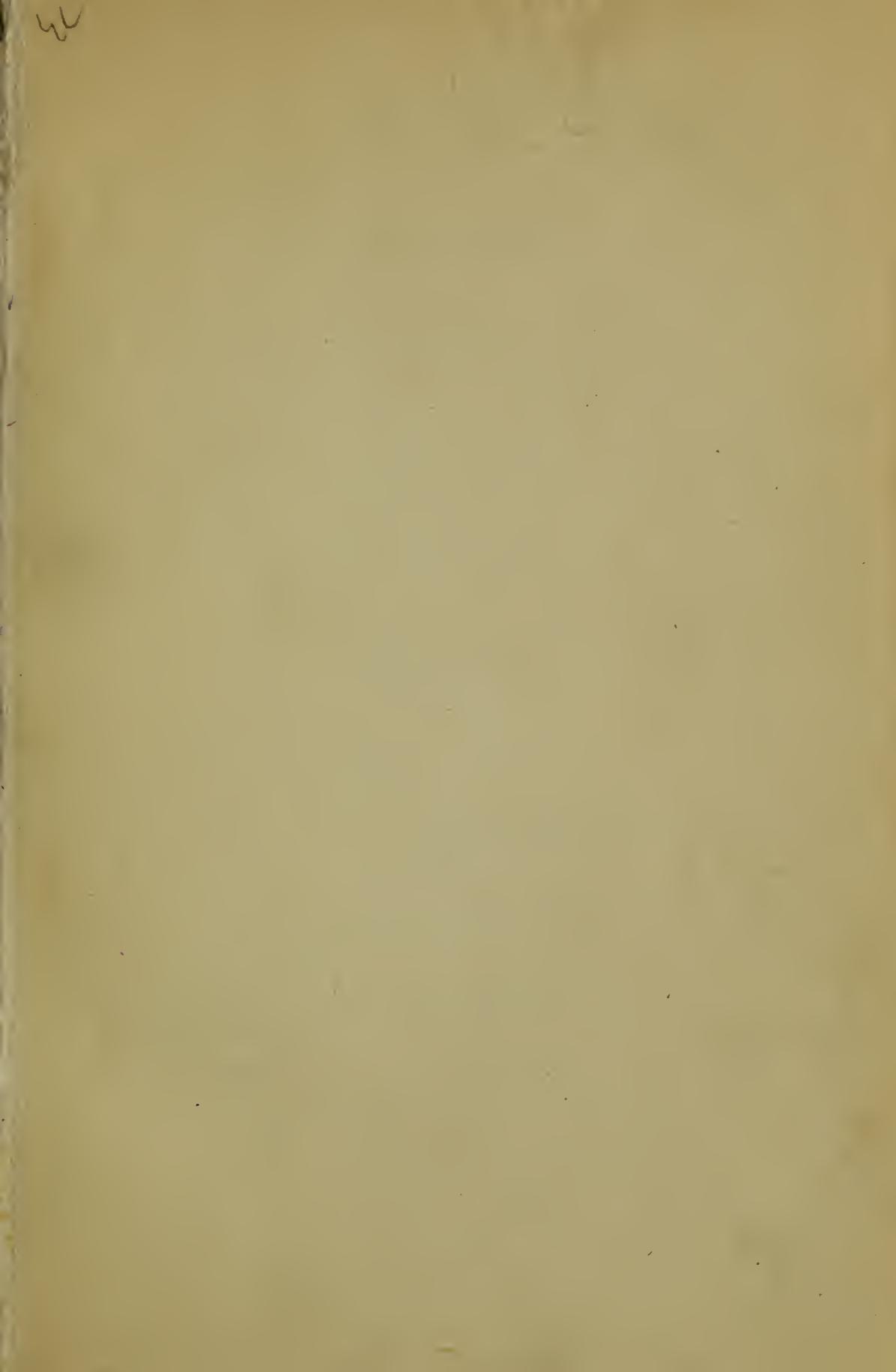
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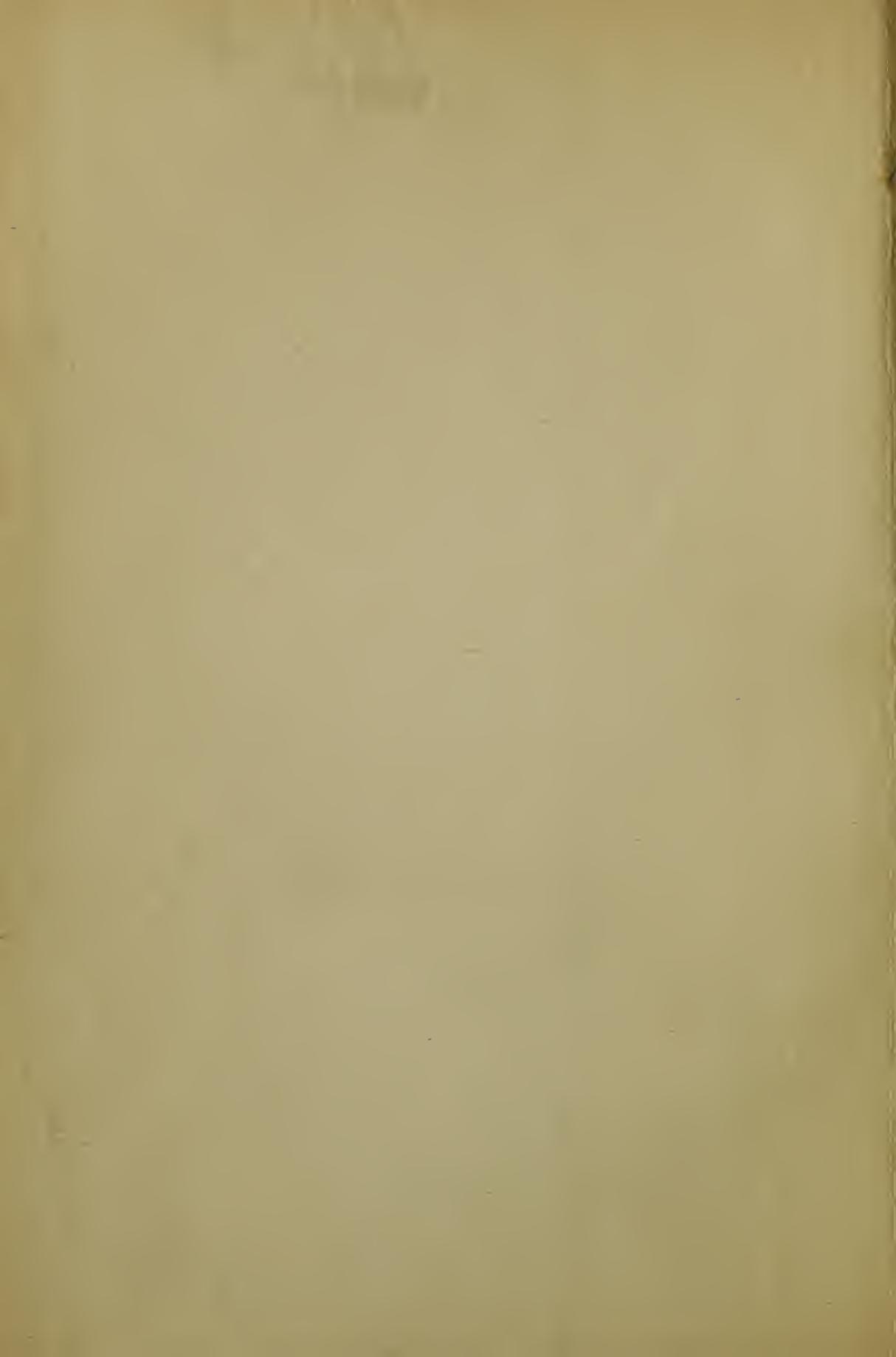
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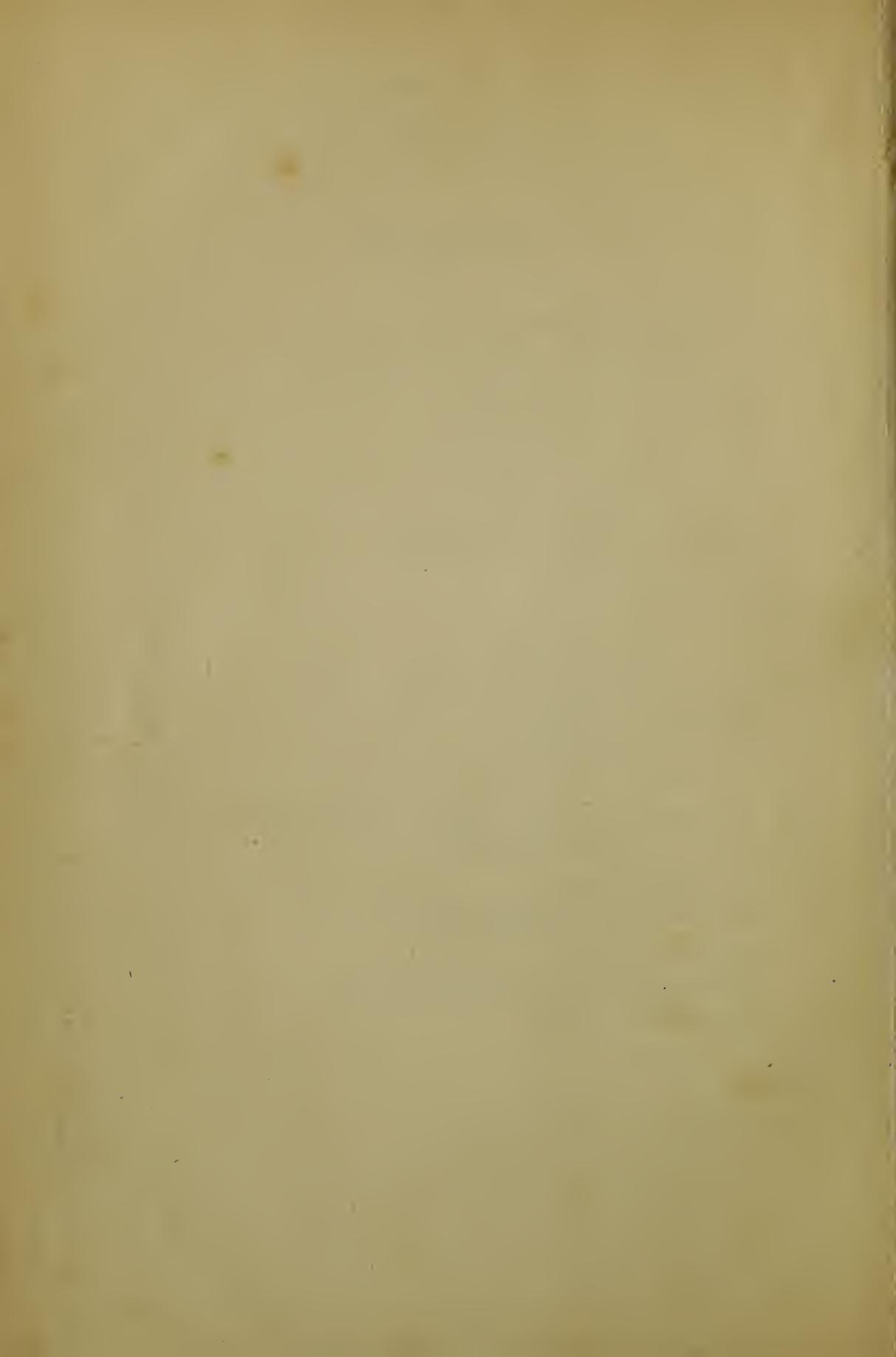
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Kaitlin Gates  
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ON ART AND ARTISTS

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## THE LIFE OF AUGUSTE RODIN

By FREDERICK LAWTON

*With many Illustrations*

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# ON ART AND ARTISTS

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## I

### THE SOCIAL MISSION OF ART

THERE exists a school of æstheticism which laughs contemptuously at the mere sight of this superscription. Art having a mission! What utter nonsense. A person must be a rank Philistine to connect with the idea of art the conception of a non-artistic mission, be it social or otherwise. Has a work of art any other mission than to give pleasure by beauty? It strives to attain no goal that lies outside of itself. It is its own object, and whoever assigns to it another, sins against the sanctity of art.

This is, in short, the theory of art for art's sake: *l'art pour l'art*. I deem this theory false and a hallmark of crass ignorance, for psychology and the history of civilisation and art, the history of all arts, prove irrefutably the vanity and worthlessness of the

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concept that denies to art any other task and mission than that of being beautiful.

Certainly art is, in the main, a purely subjective activity, in which the artist wishes solely to satisfy himself, without thinking of any person or thing external to himself. The psychological roots of all artistic creation are, in fact, an exceptional sensitiveness and feeling on the part of the artist. We know that every moderately strong impression which man—and, moreover, not only man, but also every living creature, however low in the scale—receives from the external world, excites in him processes, which, in the case of man and the higher animals, attain consciousness as emotion or passion. The emotion imperiously urges in towards liberation through movements, that is to say, muscular activity, which, in many cases, is accompanied by glandular activity, *e.g.* tears, secretion of saliva, perspiration, etc. To men of the average type the usual forms of manifesting their emotion suffice. If they have wept in sorrow, laughed for joy, cursed or clenched their fist in anger, they are pacified. Their emotion has spent itself and become exhausted, and their physical life once more flows in its accustomed channels.

However, if, instead of the average man, we have before us a creature of exceptional sensitiveness and emotionality, the psychical processes assume another shape. This creature feels all phenomena more

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acutely; they arouse in him more violent passions; his emotions are deeper and more lasting. Their normal forms of expression do not suffice to lull them. They take possession of his soul, organise themselves, show a tendency to become compelling ideas, and oppress it with psycho-motorial incitements or impulses until it has freed itself from them by acts which stand in proper ratio to the number or violence of the emotions. A being whose excessive emotionality is of an angry, malicious nature attains relief only through deeds of destruction. Such is the case with most sub-species of born criminals. Should the exceptionally strong emotions not be of a destructive nature, they find their outlet otherwise by artistic creations, which, therefore, are a liberation and solution of emotion that has become overmastering.

But this simple, as it were, normal case, in which the work of art actually fulfils a purely subjective mission, and aims at no other object than to relieve the artist's nervous system and to unburden his mind of a compelling idea—this case is actually met with only in the earliest ages of mankind. Art for art's sake—the art which is practised purely for the relief and satisfaction of the artist—is that of the cave-man of the quaternary period. The artist who adorned the walls of the Caves of Mouthe<sup>1</sup> with figures of animals; who

<sup>1</sup> In the department of Doubs.

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scratched the famous mammoth on the tusk of La Madeleine in the Dordogne; the draughtsman of Bruniquel, of Schaffhausen; the author of the rock-pictures in Sweden, probably did not trouble himself as to whether he was producing any effect on others. In all likelihood he did not work for society. His psychology is disclosed to us by the subjects he treated. He was an enthusiastic hunter, endowed with a particularly lively intuition and manual dexterity. On the days when he could not go hunting, either because bad weather prevented him doing so, or external compulsion — perhaps an accident met with in the chase—confined him to his cave, he thought longingly of his favourite occupation. The beasts that composed his usual booty lived in his imagination. His grotto was peopled with the monsters of the forest and plain of primitive times. He saw the mammoth with its stiff mane, the grisly cave-bear, the aurochs and giant-elk, the shaggy, thick-set horse of Solutré; he pursued, fought, slew them. He felt all the keen joys of these mighty deeds, and became so strongly excited that he could not refrain from realising the lively pictures of his fancy, by drawing them on bones, tusks, or rocks, or carving them on stags' horns and elephants' teeth. It would not gainsay this psychology of primitive human art, if the artists in remote ages (as the latest pre-historic investigations seem to attest) connected superstitious ideas

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with the imitation of their animals of the chase, perhaps believed by such means they cast a spell on the animals portrayed, and facilitated their capture. A superstition like this would, in its turn, become a source of fresh emotions which also seek outward expression.

Besides the hunter there was also the warrior, who liked to portray his conquered enemies, and the sensualist, who sought delight in carving female busts, the types of which, to our taste, seem very ugly, but may have appeared alluring to him.

These savage forefathers who adorned the caves of the early stone age with works of art not invariably crude ; who woke the echo of the forest valleys with plaintive or yearning melodies ; who excited themselves by sensuous dances in the moonlight nights of spring ; who formed, in symbolic and allegorical songs, their mystic impressions of the great phenomena of the weather and sky ;—these savage forefathers were the first, but at the same time last, purely subjective artists, the only real believers in the dogma of “art for art’s sake.”

In order to find them once more in our own times, we must seek them in the nursery or the Board School class - room. The artist of primitive times survives by atavism in the child. But he substitutes for the rock-wall of the cave and the mammoth’s tooth his slate, copy-book, school-books, often enough his desk and form, which he adorns with drawings

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that, if not particularly finished, are, nevertheless, always full of expression, and recognisable. The child does not give way to his artistic wantonness in order to please others. He hides it, moreover, mostly for obvious reasons, from the eyes of strangers ; he only draws to portray symbolically that which has made a strong impression on him. He always notes down the important, distinguishing features which have struck him in the phenomenon. This fierce mustache, the circle drawn across which represents the head, is for the little draughtsman the characteristic of manly dignity ; this right-angled broken stroke, which bristles up over a row of men, is the formidable bayonet that marks the soldier ; this disproportionately big stick in another man's hand is the dreaded badge that embodies the schoolmaster's power. The young artist has obeyed genuine impulses. His art forms really spring out of the deep grounds of his emotion.

With advancing civilisation, however, this state of things quickly changes. The artist soon notices that he is differently conditioned to the rest, the average men ; that his feelings are keener, their manifestation more expressive than with the latter. He becomes conscious of his superiority, fancies himself something in regard to it, and cultivates it. Other men find æsthetic pleasure in his creations, and encourage him by flattering applause which easily rises to admiration. That calls forth an

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energetic metamorphosis in the inmost processes of his work, in its causes and aims. What was once organic necessity now becomes craftsmanship; uncontrollable inspiration is replaced by custom and by style. The artist becomes his own imitator. In years of cool, methodical, routine work, he simply calls to mind the moment when the feverish workings of his brain powerfully drove him into the paths of art. He observes all rites of the creator by impulse, but they are now only an attitude which he has learnt. In theory he is still inspired by impulse; practically, he is a professional craftsman who performs the day's work imposed on him by intelligent volition. He is still always in search of self-satisfaction whilst engaged on works of art, but it is of another nature than that of the unsophisticated artist. The unconscious aim of his efforts is not to find relief from an emotional tension: he strives after the voluptuous feeling of flattered *amour propre*; he grows ambitious, very often, indeed, only vain. He thinks of his public. He anticipates his success. The thought of approbation takes the place of the effort to deliver himself from a painfully obsessing conception.

This also is always the psychology of the born artist, who is one because his organisation forces him to it. Beside him, however, swarms the innumerable crowd of imitation artists, of average, and very average men, who would never of them-

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selves have thought of becoming artists—men who would never have discovered art of themselves, if they had not had before their eyes the example of the original artists, their successes, their recognition by civilised society. These individuals pursue art, not to deliver themselves from an obsessing conception, but as a means of attaining privileges, gold, and honours. For them art is an avocation like any other, a trade learnt, which is to bring them, not to subjective psychological, but to practical and social ends. They try by a sort of mimicry to become like the original artists, but they belong to another species. Nevertheless, it is not permissible to neglect them in this consideration, for, for one thing, they constitute the vast majority of artists, from the moment when the pursuit of art has become a differentiated activity, the habitual and exclusive occupation of a separate class of society; and then the productions of these imitators are always modelled after works done through organic necessity. They are, to a certain extent, the small change of originally great values; they would like to be changed for them, and everything which is to be said of any particular problem of art, necessarily finds its application to the imitations as well as to the original pictures.

These are then the origins and stages of development of art. At the outset, it is actually what the school of “art for art’s sake” asserts of it: a subjective

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purpose, a satisfaction of an organic need on the part of the artist. Soon, however, the artist ceases to confine himself to satisfying himself in relieving himself; he also seeks to please others. In the most secret and mysterious moments of creation, the thought of other men is present in his mind; considerations as to effect and success are mixed with his productive emotions. Substitute mere craftsmanship for inspiration, then these considerations become more and more dominant, and when art has once become a regular ordinary business, and the imitators, the mere echoes and reflections, have once become the majority among those who practise it, then the artist has his eyes continually fixed on his tribunal, viz., society. In the moment his work of art is germinating, it is strongly influenced by consideration of the known or the supposed taste of the society whose applause the artist courts, and the work undergoes a development more or less remote from the form it would have acquired under the pure influence of emotion, its primary source.

Society naturally sees what place it occupies in the artist's mind, what share it has in his creations, and how important to him its verdict is. It promptly perceives its advantage. It takes possession of the artist, forces its tastes on him, and insists on his working, not for himself, but for it. Henceforward it has in him a paid servant; he has to conform his special energy to the general plan of the society

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organism of which he is a part, and, in this way, a manifestation which was originally a purely subjective performance becomes a social performance.

Art, engendered by individual emotion and transfigured into a social work, shares this lot which we have no right to call a degradation, with innumerable other main instincts, strivings, desires. It is the peculiarity of civilisation that it subdues to itself human emotions, and applies them as motive powers for the purpose of creating results which are not always, which are not even frequently, the natural purpose of these emotions. The whole existence of society, every organisation, every civilisation, rests on the application of this method; in fact, every attitude and action of man is affected by an emotion at its base. Without emotion, man is a sluggish mass, with which nothing can be done. In order to get anything from him, he must first have his mind excited, and after that we must be able to direct this excitement. All usages and regulations are merely a collection of channels dug in order to act as conduits to the emotions, and to utilise their force in regular employment. By the help of the emotions of love, society has been enabled to create marriage, which does not serve for the satisfaction of the instinct, but should guarantee economic security for the wife and children. With the emotion of sympathy — this

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preliminary condition of every social structure—with this fount of pity, altruism, and solidarity, mankind has created the political order, the State, with all its burdensome tyranny, which seems no longer to have anything at all in common with sympathy, which is, nevertheless, its emotional root. With the emotion of mysticism and superstition, society has produced practical morality and all its constraint; with self-love and vanity, patriotism and its caricature, Chauvinism; with the wicked impulses to destruction and murder, the professional qualities of the soldier, still indispensable for the security of the political organism. In short, the whole work of civilisation consists in making itself master of individual emotions, diverting them from their natural goals, applying them to the good of the whole body. The State society is a machine that is moved only by the emotions of individuals. Social life is simply the product of a very complex and skilfully conducted work of primitive emotions. If, therefore, any one exclaims slightly at the mention of the social productions of art: "That's common, rank utilitarianism!" we are justified in shrugging our shoulders. Utilitarianism? Why, certainly. Utility is the primary law of every society, of every living organism. The lowest living creature of one cell could not support itself for a single instant, unless all its parts were continually working with the object of promoting its existence, of serving the

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demands of its life—in short, making themselves useful to the whole.

When men came to observe that they possessed among them beings who had stronger emotions than the rest, and made these emotions evident by creations which were calculated to make a deep impression on other men, they, according to the standing rule—I might say, according to the biological rule—of society, made haste to place these exceptional natures, these artists, in the service of the great interests of society.

Whoever can still entertain a doubt that art has always performed a task which was by no means æsthetic, even if fulfilled by æsthetic means, let him cast a glance at the history of the arts.

Let him read the poems of antiquity, gaze on the sculptures and paintings of the Egyptians or Assyrians or Greeks. Let him listen to the far-off, and doubtless sadly distorted echo of ancient music in the Hymn to Apollo, restored by over-daring scholarship. Where will he find a work—a single work—which corresponds with the psychological scheme of the origin of artistic creation and with the definitions of the party of “Art for art’s sake”? Where is the work that has been achieved purely for self-satisfaction, for the relief of the artist’s nerves? Where is the work that is only to serve beauty? I cannot see it; but what I do see is that all known works serve some purpose of society.

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They glorify the gods, the kings, the commonwealth. They extol the dignity of belief, of government, of the mother-country. Homer shows the heroes of the Hellenic race in the bloody apotheosis of their exploits. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides unfold on the stage the myths and sagas of their ancestors. On the Acropolis, in the Parthenon, gleam the gods of the mother-country, the guardians of the commonwealth, shaped by the magic chisel of Phidias. The Stoa, the Poikile, the Stadium, are peopled with the monuments of athletes, warriors, archons, legislators, of all great men who are the people's pride, and are to serve them as models. Tyrtæus chants his sublime marches to excite the warriors to fight for their country. The singer of the Hymn to Apollo composes his cantatas to make the temple service more impressive. I am well aware that, besides these monuments, there are the little lyric poems of the Anthology, the charming little Tanagra figures, that is to say, very individual revelations, which sing the joys and sorrows of a single soul, which seize the graceful movements and gait of young women who had enraptured a single kneader of the clay. But these pretty little things, although *chef d'œuvres* of their kind, are not, however, to be compared with the triumphant creations prompted by religious belief and patriotism, whose superhuman splendour fills the centuries.

If we go from pagan antiquity to the Christian

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Middle Ages and the free-thinking or the openly atheistic Renaissance, the *rôle* of art remains unchanged. For whom does the artist work? Only for the Church and the palace. The pope, the bishop, the abbot demand of him the decoration of the cathedral and monastery. The priest under the vaulted arch, the monk in his refectory—these must have before their eyes images to remind them of the doctrines of which they are preachers and servants. The people, when they enter God's house, must be caught hold of by the representations of suffering and martyrdoms, of beneficent and comforting miracles, of the horrors of hell and the bliss of paradise, and be strengthened in their faith, seeing with their eyes and touching with their hands what religion teaches. The king's castle, the palace of the great vassals, plume themselves on the works of arts that are consecrated to the glory of their ancestors, of their rank, or, simply, of the dominant system. Here the stately tombs of kings or knights, here the statues showing the ancestor as hero or demi-god. Here the pictures of battles and sieges, of butcheries and victories. Here the painted memorials of great state ceremonies, triumphal entries, receptions of ambassadors, conclusions of advantageous treaties, famous meetings of mighty lords. The object of all this art is always to flatter the vanity of the great, to impose on the populace a high notion of their wealth and power, to make

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it feel, by all possible means of expression, the superiority of its leaders. We must go down to the Italian Renaissance in order to discover, by the side of religious, dynastic, aristocratic, and political art—for historical art was always designed to serve a political idea or arrangement—in order to discover, I say, by the side of this prescriptive art, the beginning of a purely æsthetic art. When Mantegna paints the “Muses on Olympus,” or Leonardo the “Mona Lisa,” they are no longer desirous of kindling faith or strengthening subjects in obedience, but they want to enrich and brighten existence. But whose existence? That of a wealthy and distinguished patron, of him who has placed the order with them. It is not before the Renaissance that we see the artist gradually emancipate himself from the rule that sternly dictates to him the choice of his theme, and even, up to a certain point, the method of his treatment. He then acquired to some degree the freedom to follow his own power of imagination, and could hope to get a return for his creations, even if he did not serve a dogma or a policy, even if he did not glorify a saint, a king, or a nobleman; if he simply tried to move a man’s soul by revealing the secret movements of a human soul.

We see then that, through long centuries, art had the sole task to serve the great institutions of society: religion, monarchy, or one’s native country under another form of government, the dominant castes.

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The mechanism by which art was held in bondage was the simplest and most naïve: the artist had no other customer for his works except the powers that be. These bound him by his necessity to eat daily, or nearly so. The Church, the king, the republic, the city, the ruler, gave the artist commissions, and paid him. If he found no patron in the castle or palace, he had no gold or honour to hope for from any other quarter. Now neither the Church, nor the Government, nor the privileged classes were in the habit of throwing their money out of the window. The money they expended had to bring them profit. They wanted the artist in their pay to become a champion for their cause, in exactly the same way as the cross-bowmen of their body-guard, their judge, their herald, steward, aye, their jailer and executioner. Art, in those days, preached the fear of God and his servants, submission to the king and the State, respect for nobles and officials. The ruling powers made the artist suggest to the people all that was favourable to them. Art was the school of the good subject, the artist the main prop of priestly and monarchical-aristocratic society. The common herd, the million, found none of their human emotions satisfied in art; the voices that rang out of these works only cried to them: "Pray, obey, tremble."

The Netherlanders, a free people, were the first to know an art other than the traditional one. In

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Flanders and Holland, writers, and especially painters, began to speak no longer exclusively of God and the saints, the king and the great, but of the humble, obscure, and nameless multitude. *Genre* painting revived for the first time since ancient days. It told the everyday life of the middle and lower classes, their somewhat gross joys, their somewhat commonplace sorrows ; it showed the ale-house and the mill, the sitting-room and the retail shop. This was not edifying, it is true. The philosophy of this art is low ; it hardly widens the spiritual horizon, and is of poor comfort amid the narrowness and bitterness of real life. And yet this art was a forerunner. It denoted a turning-point, the beginning of great and important things. One great king, Lewis XIV., was not deceived about it. With the sharpened keen feeling of the mighty for everything that can encroach on their superhuman dignity, he perceived at once that this new art offended against his kingly majesty. How ? There are painters who dare to treat of plebeian subjects ! What should that mean ? Does art perhaps even fancy that it can be other than a continual homage to the greatness and omnipotence of kings ? And, with an annihilating wave of his hand, he banished from his august presence these daring little pictures, these democratic works of Teniers, Ostade, Dirk Hals, and Gerard Dow, whilst uttering the historic words : “*Enlevez-moi ces grotesques.*”

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But time stands not still ; development is achieved. Modern democracy appears, and transposes all the conditions of existence of society and its members. Art cannot escape the general revolution. It experiences its influence spiritually and economically ; changes its judgment hall and its mart. We do not realise the tremendous meaning of this change. The court that decided as to the worth of the artist and his work was formerly the small circle of possible patrons—princes of the Church, the great, the courtiers. To-day this court is criticism, professional criticism. In earlier times it was enough for the artist to please a few people, perhaps only one individual, if the latter happened to be a magnate. He had not to trouble himself about the crowd ; moreover, the crowd followed docilely the lead from above. When Dante said :

“Credete Cimabue nella pintura  
Tener lo campo, ed ora ha Giotto il grido,  
Si che la fama di colui oscura ;”—

What did *grido* mean ? What was *fama* ? It was the opinion of a court, that of Rome or Pisa, perhaps of Ravenna. We must go to Aretino to discover a specimen of an art critic who was neither a Mæcenas like Leo X. or Lorenzo the Magnificent, or even a painter like Vasari, but merely an audacious spirit who arrogated to himself the right of dealing out praise and blame, and conferring glory in the

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name of something absolutely novel, in the name of public opinion.

From that time it is professional criticism which suggests to the multitude, and imposes on the mighty, its judgment on the artist. But the criticism is disinterested, or at least can be so. It does not expect of the work of art a direct personal advantage, its own glorification, the vindication of its spiritual and material influence. Its measure, therefore, grows larger and broader. It brings to its office philosophical and æsthetic considerations, which the popes and kings could not know when they gave commissions to the artists, their *protégés*. In order to secure success, the artist must now please the critic—many critics—and the latter pass a verdict on him with perceptions, with taste and spiritual prepossessions that very seldom are those of the bishops and great men.

And as the artist has got another tribunal, he also comes before the public under other material and spiritual conditions, and seeks in other ways a market for his work.

In feudal times, as we have seen, the church and palace were the places for works of art. They were seen there under circumstances little favourable for a purely æsthetic appreciation. In the cathedral people were intimidated by the significance of the vast space, the acts of faith, and the perfume of incense; in the castle, by the magnificent garments of the officials, and the weapons of the guard. It was

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in 1673 that a "Salon," *i.e.*, a regular art-exhibition, was opened in Paris; and besides the "Salon" public museums were opened everywhere, to which every one had access without invitation or introduction. The artist was now quite independent; he could work without waiting for orders. He no more needed, in order to become known, to crave humbly a visit to his possibly poverty-stricken studio. Here was a definite place where he could exhibit his work to thousands of spectators — connoisseurs, judges, possible buyers. From that time he worked with an eye to the great public which was sure not to be lacking at his regular rendezvous. If the professional critic became his judge, the mass of people became his Mæcenas. Universal suffrage has dethroned Church and royalty, and remains the artist's only patron.

I say expressly—the only. It still happens that the State, *i.e.*, a high official, perhaps a monarch, orders works, assigns to the artist the task of adorning churches and palaces, perhaps even public places and walks, or even creating a monument of political import. But who receives these commissions? The artist pointed out by public opinion, *i.e.*, the democratic crowd acting under the suggestion of the critics, who also belong to the crowd. The artist who has gained the advantage of an officially favoured position otherwise than by popular acclamation, who owes it to the whim of a ruler, the mere favouritism of a bishop or some other great personage, is nowadays not

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esteemed, but despised. He may receive some alms in the shape of money; he may collect ridiculous titles and wretched tags of coloured ribbons, but he will be branded with the name of court-artist, and this name excludes him irredeemably from fame.

The literary man in earlier times lived by the favour of a protector, whom alone he had to trouble about pleasing. Nowadays he lives, through newspapers and books, by the public at large. The dramatic poet had, for his productions, only the subsidised theatre, the theatre royal, which imposed on him its regulations. To-day this theatre is insignificant as compared with the free and independent stage, and the poet need know no other care and consideration than that of getting a good grip on his public. Then the artist had nothing to hope for, unless he served religion, the monarchy, or the aristocracy. Now subjects from these spheres have actually become laughing-stocks—*pompiers*, as they are termed with an expression of contempt; and the artist, if he would become rich and famous, must fish for his subjects in other streams of thought. This is so true that there are rulers who, from feeling that art is making itself independent of them, and will no longer serve as the herald of their thoughts, try even to produce works of art, and would impress their works on the admiration of the multitude, which, nevertheless, does not admire.

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The great revolution is consequently accomplished ; art now works only for the masses. It is still always the State that commissions ; it is still always the few rich who buy ; but it is really universal suffrage that imposes on them its own inclinations. But we do not believe that that new Mæcenas, the people at large, has other habits of mind or ways of acting than had the Mæcenas of the past. The people too, exactly like the priests and kings of old, demands that art should please and flatter it. But it further demands something else, something more than pleasure and obsequiousness—viz., a high satisfaction, a corrective of an evil of which it is perhaps not clearly conscious, but which, nevertheless, it feels strongly. And I will now try to point out this evil.

One of the most striking phenomena of modern life is specialisation applied to all departments. Every one tills merely a very little bit of field or rather he ploughs only one and the same furrow. This is true of mental craftsmen. It is still more true of handcraftsmen. What existence does such a man lead nowadays ? There is no longer one who fabricates an entire chair. One always makes the arms, another the legs, a third the back, a fourth the cane-work. A knife goes through a dozen hands, a needle, I believe, through thirty. In order to attain that extreme skill which competition demands of him and which he must supply, if he would earn

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his bread, the workman continually repeats the movement, becomes a machine, less than a machine, a tiny part of a machine, a single wheel, a single screw. His being shrivels up, his soul suffers. All development is denied him; all his faculties, except the one he is always employing, become crippled, and disappear. The man gradually sinks almost to the low level of a polypus, which is only an organ of a hydramedusa.

Whence comes the strange fascination that the foremost men of the Italian Renaissance exercise on us? The reason is that they were complete men. All their faculties were fully developed—all that offered a possibility in them was developed to the utmost. Nothing human was alien to them. With marvellous freedom they circumscribed the whole circle of human knowledge and faculties. Then the learned man was an universal scholar; his knowledge was encyclopædic. The poets were at the same time men of action. Men of rank were artists and writers, and the artists were all they wished to be. Michael Angelo painted, modelled, built the cupola of St Peter's, and wrote charming verses. Benvenuto Cellini handled the spatula as well as the mallet, the crayon as well as the pen, and the sword as well as all these tools. Macchiavelli governed as wonderfully as he wrote, and Leonardo painted the "Last Supper" between a musical composition, a treatise on mechanics, a

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plan of a fortification, the model of a triumphal car, and the plan of a canal for the purpose of irrigation. Count Castiglione's "Cortegiano" shows us the ideal of the man at the time of the Renaissance. He was probably the fairest flower ever produced by the human plant. The modern man may envy him; he can never be his peer, but must shrivel up in his narrow corner. Hypertrophy of a single, often subordinate faculty, atrophy of all the rest—such is the lot to which he is ruthlessly condemned. And there is no change possible in respect of it; no herb grown can prove an antidote to that bane. Division of labour gives to the whole advantages too great to be dispensed with out of consideration for the individual. Division of labour is the true condition of all progress, though in this case, as in so many others, progress exacts a heavy, very heavy, price for its services.

Every one is painfully aware of this reverse side of progress; many consciously take themselves to task for it. Why has the madhouse philosophy which extols the superman been able to subjugate spirited youth? Because it meets the longing for a fuller life of the personality. And anarchism? What is the secret that makes it attractive to true consciences and loving hearts? Nothing except that anarchy seems to promise unchecked development of the individuality. In all these nonsensical, wild, and criminal movements there is some little

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revolt against the pinching and tightening in of the personality entailed by the modern conditions of labour, and this is the ingredient that recruits adherents among those unaccustomed to rigorous examination of their thoughts. And when the workmen demand an eight-hours' day, what do they want? To find time to go and drink at the public house, to be able to idle, as the ill-wishers who calumniate them assert? No; they want to have a few hours in which to cease to be mechanical tools, in which they may again be men, and participate in the great life of the community.

But by what means can we give back to men what division of labour and specialisation—these irrefragable consequences of contemporary progress—have taken from them? By what means can we remake beings developed from them harmonic? Perhaps in a very distant future science will effect this necessary, demanded, and longed for miracle. Perhaps mankind will once more see these workers who earn their bread during a part of the day by handicraft, and during the rest of the time linger on the highest summits of human thought and knowledge; a Socrates, who is a stonemason; a Spinoza, who polishes spectacle glasses. But, as I have said before, that will be feasible only in a very remote future, for science is not easily accessible; the way leading to it is long and rough, and the full life through science is possible

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only to men of a higher spiritual development than the average people nowadays.

But if science is no longer the usual companion of the man of the masses, and, unfortunately, will not be so for a long time, art, on the other hand, admits him to familiar intercourse. No tedious initiation is requisite for it, nor any hard labours which the majority cannot perform. It is sufficient to have eyes and ears, and a human heart in one's breast. After an apprenticeship, which may be very short ; after some habituation which one easily acquires by intercourse with beautiful works, almost every one arrives so far that, even if he cannot appreciate the technical and philosophical merits of a work of art with consciousness, yet he can feel its charm and be susceptible of emotions from it.

Art it is, then, which can give to modern humanity what it most needs—the means of attaining the full life. Here lies, unless I am deceived, the greatness, the lofty mission of art in a democratic society which rests on a civilisation, the marks of which, the real condition of which, are severe specialisation and division of labour carried to an extreme.

Art raises man out of industrialism and introduces him to a higher world. In this artist-created world the man who is bundled together stretches himself straight ; the shrivelled broadens out ; the fraction of a man becomes complete. Here he who belongs to his machine or observation-instrument becomes

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once more a free man and citizen of the world—a man participating in the life of the community, and enjoying with the rest all the beauties of heaven and earth, all the greatness of heart and soul of the pick of men. Through art a person imprisoned in his daily avocation comes into communion with all civilisation. Here is the paradise to which the astronomer descends from his constellations, to which the miner ascends from his pit, in order to participate in the same joys and raptures, to bring to flower whatever potentialities they possess. The mission of art in society present and future is, in short, to liberate the prisoner of subdivided labour, to restore the dignity of manhood to the being degraded into a little wheel of a machine.

But art, which is to fulfil this new and lofty mission, cannot, manifestly, be conventional art. On this theocracy, monarchy, and aristocracy have stamped the character that suited them. The multitude at the present day find no sort of joy in works which depict to them the bliss of paradise and the torments of hell, which extol some paste-board king with crown and sceptre, which offer for their admiration the greatness of blue-blooded privileged beings. Like the patrons of earlier times, the people, who now represent Mæcenas of old, are interested in art only for themselves. The sources of their emotions in art

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are the emotions of their own lives. In the work of art that is to attract them, they must find themselves again, but, as formerly the priest and king did, magnified and ennobled. The work of art must show him his own likeness, but a beautiful one ; it must raise the people in their own eyes, and teach them to respect themselves.

This the common realism has not comprehended, which broke in on art with a din, and dared to call upon the democracy. The genuine people has never had a mind to realism of this sort, but has always dismissed it roughly. The rough proof of a hateful and tedious reality, such as the pictures of Courbet or Bastien Lepage, has never attracted any but the superfine, and this only, by the well-known psychological law of contrast, whereby an impression that is the exact opposite of the usual impression can impart a pleasurable feeling for a short time. The rich and luxurious like to see works of ugliness and misery ; the poor and afflicted do not like them. It is the same in regard to literature. Reluctant protests have frequently become loud, in these socialistic days, against the realism which a party organ offers its readers. The working class do not wish to know anything about this realism which professes to be modern and democratic, yet is, in reality, only wretched and repulsive. It coops them up in the narrowness of their everyday existence, but their wish is to get out of it.

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Pictures such as Millet's, sculptures such as Constantin Meunier's—works which seek to show the dignity and beauty of the occupations of the masses, which constitute a hallowing of work, an apotheosis of the tragedies and idylls, of all the sweet and bitter emotions of the people's life—these works, to my thinking, exhibit the type of future art.

Some great genius will, perhaps, find another formula. What one may, however, say for certain is this, that the art of the future will not be realistic in the narrow sense of the word. But it will not be mystical and æsthetic either. The people will never interest themselves in half-tone angels of boundless length, in violet-hued Virgins with lilies in their hands in a conventional bush, in enigmatical, mysterious verses. And esoteric art will never give the people what they need, viz., the liberating ideal. The art of the cultivator of the Ego, the *dilettante*, of the snobs of a Talmi-aristocracy, presumes to demand the future for itself. Is that to be an art of the future, an art of progress? One can only laugh at the notion. The art of the future will be no "little chapel," but a mighty cathedral, wide enough to admit the whole of mankind. And that will be exactly its vocation: to be the hallowed place wherein mankind will rise again to the childship of God for which religion has educated them in past stages of evolution.

## II

# SOCIALISTIC ART

CONSTANTIN MEUNIER

Is there a socialistic art? Can such a thing exist? So far as Socialism is an economic and political philosophy it is hardly comprehensible with the means of expression of art. If the plastic arts are to be instructive, they do not amount to more than chill symbols and halting allegories. On the other hand, they are not prevented from digging down to the psychical roots of Socialism, and presenting the fundamental feelings and ultimate intuitions from which it springs. One of these fundamental feelings is pity for the disinherited. One of the ultimate intuitions is that of the dignity of all work done with moral earnestness and entire devotion.

The artist can show us the destitute, to whose presence amidst our civilisation applies more sharply, what the Psalmist<sup>1</sup> asserts of the life of

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xc. 10 in Luther's version.

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man in general: "And if it has been splendid, it has been toil and labour"—toil and labour without a ray of happiness; severe physical exertion rendered more wretched by sorrow and distress. Such a picture grips our hearts, and urges on us painful questions: is this misery inevitable? Is it cruelly ordained by nature herself or a consequence of faulty institutions, capable of improvement on the part of man? Cannot we introduce into the lot of this ill-used brother something of joy?

And the artist can also show us the worker, not in want and suffering, like the beast of burden, humiliated into the slave of matter, but rather as creating eagerly, proud of displaying his strength, joyful in the conviction of success, regarding his skill as his honour. This aspect fills us with respect, perhaps with admiration. It opens to us the comprehension of the import of the workman, and the lofty reality of his achievement.

In both cases the artist fashions fully from life; he need not exaggerate, he need add nothing; he can confine himself to the plain facts of life. He need not betray any prejudice or any extra-artistic aim. He will, nevertheless, so contrive that one will be able to speak without falsification of his art as of a socialistic one. For his work will put the spectator in the mood in which he will be inclined to hail as progress every transforma-

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tion which can improve the earthly lot of the worker, and increase his value in the community.

The school of æsthetes, which maintains the principle of art for art's sake, will, I grant, admit works of this sort as a form of Socialism, indeed, but not as a form of art. I do not belong to this school. I oppose it at all times and everywhere as strongly as I am able. I am convinced that art has a social mission which reaches far beyond mere gratification, that it must necessarily be moral, and, in the highest sense of the word, useful; not useful in the simple way of painted or chiselled aids to intelligence, not moral in the vulgar way of tracts; but moral through stimulating what is most human and noble in our spirit and soul, and useful through educating us to deeper and wider conceptions of phenomena. In one point, however, I agree with the heralds of *l'art pour l'art*—I demand beauty in a work of art; not beauty alone, but beauty in the first place.

In order, then, that we can speak of a Socialistic art, the works that would deserve this designation must not only excite sympathy with the disinherited, and respect for the workman, but they must also arouse æsthetic feeling, they must be beautiful. This claim, of course, excludes no kind of beauty. The tragic is absolutely beautiful. Purification is one of the most powerful æsthetic influences. Truth can be beautiful if essential and expressive. The

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socialist who would prove himself an artist must possess the lucky gift to see and exhibit beauty in the figures and actions of the class of society for which his heart beats.

All these conditions no contemporary artist known to me fulfils in the same degree as Constantin Meunier, the Belgian sculptor, painter, and draughtsman. Meunier died an old man in 1905. He was born in the 'thirties' of the last century. The world was slow to recognise him, not because he did not deserve recognition, but because he did not seek it. He was big and unassuming. He lived quietly in a little Belgian town as a teacher in an art school, and modestly avoided the roar of fame's mart. He had even refused to allow the reproduction of one of his noble bronzes, for business purposes, by a first-rate Paris house which was prepared to pay a munificent price for the right of sale. He was loth that his piece should become a factory-cast and a shop-window article. He belongs to the narrowest circle of the blessed, of the chosen. He is one of the Prometheus-like artists; he informs and inspires life. He feels like a Samaritan, he thinks like an apostle of the submerged, who utters a great cry of wrath over the harshness and unrighteousness of the social scheme, and he compels the bronze, like a Benvenuto Cellini, translated from what was aristocratic and classic into that which is modern and democratic.

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In Meunier's work there is a unity from which he seldom digresses. He lived in a Belgian district of coal-pits and smelting furnaces, in the very midst of rough labourers who passed their lives in the galleries of mines, or in the fiery glow of furnace mouths. He found his models among these figures. There the Labour movement in Belgium arose — one of the most rapid in Europe; there Meunier's art grew up — one of the most intensive at the present time. The miner and the iron-smelter are his heroes; he admires their strength, and from the bottom of his heart he bewails their pains. And if he is unfaithful to his Cyclopses, it is only, touched and enraptured, to look after his other darlings — the country folk working in the fields, a subject which instils in him as much reverence as the burrowing of the coal-miners underground, and the powerful hammer-strokes of the iron-smiths.

One of his greatest creations, perhaps his greatest is a bronze a span high, representing an old woman, the wife or, as I would rather assume from the stormy intensity of her emotion, the mother of a miner, who, after a driving storm, has gone to the mouth of the shaft of a coal-pit, to which the corpse of some one belonging to her has been brought.

The woman stands there, leaning slightly forward, her countenance petrified with dumb despair, her arms limp, her one hand lying in the other, yet

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without any convulsion, and powerless, her knees through a very slight bend betraying her trembling, her feet instinctively somewhat turned inwards, so as to give a broader support to the body, and to protect the almost crippled figure from falling down. The whole is such a frightfully expressive picture of a poor human creature who has, as it were, received a blow on the head, and in her crushed condition is not strong enough even for sobbing and wringing her hands, that it strikes the spectator with a cold shudder. Observe, the old woman wears the garments of the poor Walloons, heavy, stiff gowns and neckerchiefs, the hard angles and folds of which can express only very roughly and indistinctly the soft play of the weakly-quivering muscles. What penetrating keenness of observation does it need to recognise in an entirely self-contained form shrouded in uncouth, shapeless clothes, without gestures or play of features, and to imitate, without the slightest exaggeration, yet overpoweringly, the tenderest lines which, even in such unfavourable conditions of material, express clearly and dramatically all that is passing in this almost impenetrably veiled human soul. This little figure, no larger than the decoration of a clock, is a great monument, and, like every real work of art, it points far beyond the limits of itself. It reveals much more to the power of imagination than it manifests to the eye. This is actually proved in this very case;

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for Meunier has a group which supplements the work described: the same old woman, and before her, lying outstretched on the ground, the corpse of him whom she is bewailing. We might think that this more complete work would be more deeply affecting than the fragmentary one. The contrary, however, is the case. The corpse, although modelled so exquisitely, leaves us cold; it does not realise the conception we have formed of it. We had expected to feel a horror at the sight of it, at which the blood would congeal in our veins. We are astonished and disappointed at seeing lying there only an unknown man who does not concern us. When we look at the old woman petrified by grief we think of the corpse which is not exhibited to us; we see it with our spiritual eyes in the horror of the old woman, we share the feelings of the old woman, the unseen corpse is that of a relation of our own, the dead man himself is dear to us, we ourselves have suffered the loss of him. On the other hand, the completed group makes any co-operative exertion of our imaginative powers superfluous.

The corpse lies there visible; it distracts our attention from the old woman; we feel less keenly her emotion; the incident no longer occurs in the Holy of Holies of our soul, but in a forecourt, in a place of inspection. We could, in imagination, endow the corpse with the features of a dear relative, and feel sorrow for the dead man: inspection teaches

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us that the corpse is a stranger to us, and we have no grounds for shedding tears over it. The two works, placed in juxta - position, fully bear out the old dictum, that a work of art is more powerfully effective in proportion as it more strongly excites our imaginative faculties to creative co-operation.

A series of works brings before us the life of the coal-miners. Some of them come to daylight after their shift is ended. They are tired, but cheerful. About their wearied countenances there seems to quiver a reflection of the hearth-fire which awaits them familiarly in their poor homes. Here is a miner at his work. In a painful, half-recumbent position he handles the mattock in the narrow gallery under the seam from which he is dislodging the coal. Here another is sitting inactive, with his spade and lamp, with only a pair of trousers on, the upper part of his body naked, without a particle of fat on his muscles steeled by toil. Here a worker at a smelting furnace, likewise sitting—a reminiscence of the famous "Les Fois" of Bastien Lepage, which is at present in the Luxembourg. Like this peasant lass, Meunier's labourer is completely bestialised ; he stares vacantly before him, with a jaw open like that of an animal ; his hand, unused to inactivity, hangs down heavily. It is a shocking picture of the degradation of man through a one - sided exertion of the muscles ; a

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forcible harangue in favour of the eight hours' day, which would leave more time for the human working machine, not only, as his opponents assert, to visit the public-house, but also for spiritual life.

Meunier rises to the height of the Vedic hymns when he turns towards the countryman and his heroic deeds in nourishing mankind. In the relief, "The Harvest," a band of reapers—four men and two women—are grappling with the ripe corn. One seizes violently the stalks, the second, bending forward, makes a wide stroke with his sickle, a woman binds into sheaves the ears that have been mown. In the background, one longing for rest looks at the position of the sun, and another, *rapido fessus aestu* (fatigued by the scorching summer heat), to use Vergil's words, wipes the sweat from his brow. There is the note of the Eclogues about this work. Over it floats the consecration of the lofty act with which the rooted son of the soil, the ploughman—the creator and bearer of all civilisation—gains the bread of mankind out of the earth. A single figure, "June," is also created from this emotion. It is the realisation in free sculpture of a *motif* from the relief. A reaper, stripped to the waist, emaciated by the heavy toil of harvesting, exhausted by his day's work, leans upon his scythe and glances, shading his eyes with his hand, at the sun—"I would it were bedtime and all was over." One would like to press the hand of

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this brave, good fellow, or at any rate that of the artist who has represented him to us so faithfully and straightforwardly.

All Meunier's works have not this delicacy ; many are weak, some absolute failures. As an instance of such I point to "The Puddlers," though it has been particularly admired by some critics. Three iron-founders stand at the open stoke-hole of the puddle-furnace, and feed it with mighty pieces for melting. From the opening issue steam and smoke, which curl round the three men wielding rakes and tongs, and eddy upwards. Meunier has tried to represent this steam in sculpture. He has given it a concrete form, necessarily the same corporeality as the bodies, tools, blocks of metal, the flaming furnace ; for sculpture possesses no means of differentiating the thickness of matter, when it abandons the mere engraved line or the make-shift of various perforations. The result is, that instead of smoke there is an amazing image which partly reminds us of an untrimmed dab of plaster, partly of a weather-beaten stalactite. Meunier was originally a painter, and took to sculpture only late in life. His "Puddlers" are formed with the technique of a painter, from which the artist did not immediately emancipate himself. Another relief, "The Bricklayers," is absolutely a mistake. Two men are standing in the loam-pit and handing up the bricks to their

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mates above. They do this with theatrical gestures, as if a conquered king were handing over his crown to his conqueror. The contrast between the bombastic movement and its vulgar purpose is so grotesque that the picture has an irresistibly comic effect. Here Meunier is, for the only occasion in all the works of his with which I am acquainted, insincere and affected. I have looked for a long time at this deplorable work, and it made me thoughtful. How heavy is the responsibility of the critic! Supposing I knew nothing of Meunier and only saw this work, I should find it hard to resist the impulse to abuse him in the sharpest terms, for it unites the two worst faults that can be found in a work of art: it is at the same time inanely futile and obtrusively pretentious. So far I should be acting within the scope of my perfect rights. But am I certain that I was not allowing myself to be carried away by my own natural propensity to generalise, and to condemn not only the work, but also its author, to call him a bungler and a botcher? Such a verdict would, apparently, be well-grounded and, in fact, revoltingly false. Works such as "The Bricklayers" are a warning to the critic; they admonish him to be conscientious. Their teaching is that every comprehensive verdict on an artist must presuppose a knowledge of his whole life's work, and that no single work can offer sufficient basis for the

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general appreciation of its author, especially of his depreciation.

In his figures of the miners and iron-founders, Meunier showed sympathy with the lot of the proletariat; in his portrayals of the countryman's life, reverence for the civilising work of the man who ploughs the soil. But he reveals in certain other works of similar subjects beauty which prevents us from wishing for one moment for those Invalides of Olympus, the unchangeable troop of academic sculpture. The "Blacksmith" wielding his hammer, the "Harbour-Workers," the more than life-sized "Smith," are discoveries which are tantamount to revelations. Especially this smith in his working garb, with his stiff leather apron, leggings, and the foot coverings that are intended to protect him from the sparks. Leaning on the tongs that are almost the height of a man, he rests his hand on his hips and waits until it is his turn to attack the work. There is a proud tranquillity, and a reserve of ready strength in him that carry us away. This artisan is every whit as handsome in his way as an antique statue in a toga of ample fold, or a noble nudity, or a knight in romantic armour. His body possesses the elegance which perfect fitness confers, his movement the energetic restraint that the workman, thrifty in exerting himself, acquires through being in the habit of avoiding every prodigal expenditure of his strength. Meunier trains our

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eyes to appreciate the æsthetic charm of this phenomenon of our own days, which great art has hitherto stupidly passed by.

Of what expressive poetry Meunier is capable we recognise with admiration in a statue of an animal, the mine-horse—one of those unfortunate nags which are brought to the mine as foals, in order to draw the coal waggons to the galleries, and who are condemned to spend the whole of their lives in the bowels of the earth, far from the sun. The animal's head droops, its lips are flabby, eyes half-closed, ears sunken, flanks fallen in; the whole wretchedness of an innocent creature condemned to night and woe is embodied in this shivering beast. The mine-nag has certainly no sense of its disconsolate fate; it does not miss the sun, or long for green pastures. It does not envy its luckier brothers who can skip in the fresh grass beneath the blue sky. Meunier has all these feelings for it; he infuses them into the animal's stupid soul; but doubly amazing is the power with which he himself can express through a coarse animal body humanly lofty tragedy.

What had already become clear to me when I saw Meunier's works separately in the *salon* at the Champs de Mars, deepened itself within me, at the sight of the whole collection of them, into a certain conviction that Meunier is, perhaps unconsciously, a pupil of Millet's. He learnt from

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him to look with reverence on the homely men who with holy zeal, without gazing to the left or right, with body and soul in their work, wrest the works of civilisation from the forces of nature. He improves Millet's peasants and artisans into the plastic and monumental. It is the same simplicity, almost crudeness ; the same contempt of pose, the same extreme energy of activity, and the same deep, inward life as in the master who painted the "Angelus." And what makes the most vivid impression on us in Meunier, as in Millet, is the ardent piety with which the sight of true and earnestly working people fills him—people who rise high in their apparently humble, yet fruitful and, through its connection with the corporate life of mankind, especially significant labour. An artist, however, who discloses to us such outlooks on the path of civilisation, and such insight into the human soul, has some claim to a place near the acknowledged masters.

### III

## THE QUESTION OF STYLE

A HISTORY of style—I mean of style in general, not of one particular style—has, so far as I am aware, never been written. That I can understand. It would be a gigantic task, even exceeding the power of an encyclopædist. It would have to show from what spiritual peculiarities of the artist; from what necessities and intuitions of the time; from what requirements of the material, and from what compulsion on the part of the technique, the style develops, and it would have to measure the whole range of individual and national psychology, of customs, of material and of technology. The individual, however, whose powers do not suffice for an exhaustive and systematic exposition of the genesis and mutation of styles, can constantly register partial observations, and throw light on sections of this wide province.

Every human activity is excited by a need. We fabricate weapons, implements, shelter, and clothing, because we need them. In the earliest

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stages of human artistic skill, purpose and material alone control the productions of the human hand ; style, so far as we can speak of such a thing, is purely constructive. It makes us recognise the influence of a small number of bio-mechanical and psychological laws—laws that have hardly varied during all the thousands of years in the history of human morals. These laws are those of the least effort and of selfishness. By virtue of the law of least effort we choose the most promising material, *i.e.*, at which we have most conveniently to hand, which can be worked in the easiest way, or is most durable, and for that reason, more especially saves us the too frequent repetition of the effort. We choose the form to which the material employed adapts itself most readily. The problem which the constructive element in style has to solve is this: given a determined task which should be performed by an artistic expedient, how will this object be most readily, and yet most perfectly, attained with the material available?

The law of selfishness alters the natural course of the law of least effort, and often operates quite in opposition to it. The possessor of an object wishes to be remarked ; he will distinguish himself from others, be admired and envied by them, whereby he will gain influence over their minds. He will therefore demand that for the object not the most easily

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procured material, but the rarest, and that which can be furnished only with the utmost difficulty, be employed, that the form require not the least, but greatest possible amount of labour. He will likewise wish the workmen to sacrifice the elegance of economy, not to represent what is alone real and necessary with the smallest expenditure of material, but, on the contrary, to lavish material, and make it quite visible and quite striking; to add to the Useful and Essential, also the Superfluous, so as to suggest the notion of wealth. The idea of elegance will alter its meaning. It will no longer signify the greatest suitability and perfect appropriateness, but, in the first place, costliness of material, difficulty of work, wastefulness—in a word, luxury.

The law of selfishness bursts the narrow frame of construction, and adds to style its second element, decoration. This, too, is still under the law of least expenditure of force; this, too, is still primarily subordinate to construction, *i.e.*, utility, but it strives to render itself independent of the constructive element, and to become its own object. The history of each particular style shows this conflict between the constructive and decorative elements. At first construction rules alone; next, decoration, called forth by the *amour propre* of the fabricator or possessor, joins it, but very timidly and very modestly. It obsequiously gets out of the way of construction, and contents itself with corners where

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the constructive element has nothing to do. But gradually it gets bolder, steps from its holes and corners, confronts construction, compels it to give way and take less comfortable by-paths, and finally subjects the constructive element entirely to its will and caprice, so that, in the decadent period of a style, a useful object becomes wholly unserviceable for its original purpose, and is only an excuse for decoration, which self-gloriously gives itself airs.

There is another contrast between construction and decoration. The constructive is the social element in the product of human labour; the decorative the individual one. I do not think that this dictum needs an elaborate explanation; it seems clear enough to me. In construction expression is given to a need which is, at a given time and in a given place, shared by many or all; it answers not only a condition, but a demand of the community. Decoration is—at any rate originally—the outcome of individual taste and individual imaginative power. Construction is a thing necessitated, and therefore *banal*; decoration is superfluous, and therefore charming. The former appeals to the understanding; the latter is fantastic and sentimental. The human consciousness is, however, so arranged that—for its gain? for its loss? (I have treated this question so often and so thoroughly in other places that I may here leave it undiscussed)—it derives its feelings of pleasure and aversion

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incomparably more from its sensuous than from its intellectual life. Wherefore, for practical purpose in style, only those who are most highly developed intellectually have appreciation; on the other hand, for what is pleasing, all whose nervous system is susceptible to pleasurable feelings.

An individual decorative invention becomes style by the imitation of others, which can be slavish or free. A single work, a single artist, will never be felt as a phenomenon of style. There is the same difference between originality and style as between the picture of a certain person and the composite or average photograph of Galton. The feature of family likeness that runs through the works of one period and one place, however, like that which all members of a blood-relationship exhibit, is explained most simply through descent from a common ancestor.

Decoration is either organic or transferred. The former is the outgrowth of construction, and gives it a new meaning, unites to the idea of its purpose a simile that can be correct or false, pleasant or silly; the latter is added externally, and only aims at the beautification of the surface, without adopting living and necessary relations to the structure and destination of the object. Surface decoration may be pretty and rich, but it is always something subordinate, and always speaks of poor imagination and slight inventive power. Organic decoration is alone the outcome of a creative gift for art.

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The psychical mechanism, which produces organic decoration, is always the same ; it is the co-operation of association of ideas and anthropomorphism. I know very well that this latter is only a particular instance of the former ; but I cite the really identical, nevertheless, as two apparently different ideas, so as not to become vague through too wide generalisation.

For the sake of clearness I will quote a concrete example. In collections, one not infrequently meets with a mediæval plane having the figure of a crouching lion with jaws open and a wild expression. It is easy to reproduce the psychic process through which this form arose. The joiner who uses the plane, and follows his own work reflectively, sees how the mouth of the plane, when applied, strikes the iron into the surface of the wood, and tears the splinters from it. What is more obvious than to think at the same time of jaws pouncing on the wood to flay and mangle it? The technical German expressions, *Hobelmaul* and *Hobelwangen* (plane-mouth and plane-cheeks) for the aperture in which the *Hobeleisen* (plane-iron) is fixed, show that the association of ideas at once presented itself when the tool assumed the form familiar to us. The mediæval artist went further ; he has logically developed the image of a rending and devouring mouth suggested by association of ideas. He has given it form ; he has examined it with sufficient artistic intensity to embody materially the picture

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presented by the word, to raise it from the rhetorical to the plastic. But whilst the artist advanced from the mouth of the plane to a lion's jaws, and from the latter to an entire lion crouching over the board as over a victim that he has attacked and torn down, and mangling it with raging delight, he has at the same time made use of anthropomorphism, has imputed to the plane will, passion, gruesome enjoyment, and turned the planing into the tool's riotous satisfaction of bloodthirsty wild-beast instincts.

This plane in the shape of a crouching lion is the model of a good organic decoration. The construction is not injured ; it does no damage to the under-surface of the plane, that it is the smooth-lying belly of the lion with drawn claws ; it does not prejudice the working capacity of the iron, that it is let into a mouth of a slightly waving lip shape ; it does not make it difficult to work, that the handle is shaped like a round lion's head. A sense is communicated to the tool which it did not originally possess ; it does not shave and smoothe, but lives, tears, devours, and finds its joy therein. Organic decoration is thus an infusing of soul into that which possessed no soul ; and not only this, but also in a higher and nobler way, a submerging of oneself in the soul that the artist has inspired into that which was soulless. He must live in the being which his anthropomorphising association of ideas has excogitated. "What should I feel, how

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should I act, what movements should I make, what expression should I have, if I were this object, but thinking, willing, feeling—in short, living and conscious? How should I, for instance, as a plane which was really a beast of prey, dispose myself, if I had the board—my victim—under me, and began devouring it?" The organically decorative artist is, therefore, really the dramatiser of the inanimate, for he creates beings, bestows on them character, and makes them act according to the latter and the situation, and, if not speak, nevertheless imitate.

If an artist has, from some especially vivid intuition and active association of ideas, found and embodied an anthropomorphic likeness which is very strikingly clear, imitation seizes it and repeats it with slight individual changes, which are, now and then, spirited and happy, but, for the most part, make the original picture dull, nay, through stupidity or misunderstanding may degrade it to nonsense. Such is exactly the case with the material picture as with the word-picture. At first it is the new and peculiar discovery of a poetic mind, then it is repeated well or ill so often that it ends with being a characterless commonplace. Every cultivated language is made up of such commonplaces, and, in like manner, style is made up of repetitions and tones, which are the plastic equivalent of rhetorical phrases.

The psychic sources of style—in contradistinction

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to those of freely devised organic decoration, which style only repeats and vulgarises—originate in very mean domains of mind. They are thoughtlessness, or, to put it more clearly and briefly, stupidity and mental inertia in their special forms as imitativeness and detestation of novelty.

It is thoughtlessness when we imitate forms that are suited to a particular material in a quite different material, simply because we are used to the sight of them. The far-famed Greek temple architecture is largely a result of this thoughtlessness : it slavishly imitates in stone the wooden architecture, the place of which it has taken ; it retains the beams with projecting beam-heads and cross-braces that have neither object nor meaning in stone. To the same category belong the tablets, with manifold curled up and twisted edges, which the Renaissance and the Rococo executed in stone and wood, although they have no sense or justification except in sheet metal : the contemporary Moscow silver-work, which imitate painfully enough damask linen with Russo-Byzantine coloured embroidery, or cakes and black-bread in precious metals or enamel : the marble veils, lace garments, and knitted stockings of the North-Italian sculptors of the decadence, etc.

It is mental inertia when we mechanically persist in repeating forms which either are unfitted for a given object, or have lost all meaning. For two thousand years artists of all sorts have made

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a decorative use of acanthus leaves in countries where no human eye has ever had an acanthus leaf before it. The Middle Ages decorated with a whole menagerie of beasts from Asia and Africa, which they knew only from fables, foreign textures, and pictures. From imitation to imitation the outlines, which no comparison with the actual model corrected and restored to accuracy, became more inexact and grotesque. Thus arose acanthus capitals which are more like rough logs than the elegantly curled plant, and heraldic lions and leopards, in which no feature any longer reminds us of the great cats. This is then called improving upon the natural form, and people even discover a particular beauty in it: a striking proof of the ability of mankind to make a virtue out of necessity. For the so-called stylisation is conscious and intentional only in late conservative imitation. It arises, however, quite involuntarily through unintelligent imitation of a pattern that is incorrectly felt and grasped, because one has never known its living model. So, too, the whole mythology of the Greeks still haunts our present-day decoration, which mythology was to the Greek artists a part of their living feeling and religious conviction, whilst to-day it has lost all thought and feeling. What can Neptune's trident, Orpheus' lyre, the Sirens and the Centaur, the Sphynx and the Gorgon, signify to a son of this century? But whilst these bits of inherited

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form wander from one imitator to another, until they become hopelessly unrecognisable, they gain a beauty of another sort which they did not originally possess: the venerable spell of antiquity surrounds them, and this charm, in its turn, touches certain susceptibilities of the soul, the inclination to mystic, twilight conceptions of what is remote in time and place, the pleasurable feeling of comfortable persist-  
ance in that to which we are accustomed, the connection of the familiar and always known with the remembrance of all strong impressions, both happy and unhappy, of childhood and youth. This mystico-archaic and subjectively sentimental element, which occurs in every style handed down traditionally, furnishes it with fanatical devotees whom its original decorative value could never win. That is, if I may say so, the religious side of the feeling for, and appreciation of, style.

From the oppressive mass of material, which I must, for the most part, leave untouched, I am afraid I must deal with only one more question:— Is there a new style? Is the so-called “Secessionism” a style which characterises our time, or, perhaps, a fugitive moment of our time? He who has attentively observed the later exhibitions on this point will be bound to say “No” decisively. Household furniture and room decoration of the “secessionist” order are tortured into appearing new and original; but they are neither the one nor the

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other, but a patient, methodical eclecticism which aims at the influence of what is foreign and peculiar. We distinguish accurately that rooms built and painted in the secession style are patched together of Chinese motives, with an addition of Loie Fuller's serpentine twistings, and that secessionist furniture imitates, in good wood and metal, the slenderness, knottiness, and pliancy of bamboos. The secession contains a very minute percentage of independent invention and a great many reminiscences of Eastern Asia. The West European style, which should ostensibly be the expression of the latest high European tendencies, is, in reality, Chinese and Japanese style, exaggerated by absurdity of form and assumed or real delirium.

## IV

### THE OLD FRENCH MASTERS

WE must once more change our method of study. That is the immediate result of the Exhibition of Old French artists—painters, draughtsmen, enamellers, sculptors—which, in 1904, in the Pavillon de Marsan at the Louvre, brought together several hundred fascinating, and perhaps half a dozen overpowering works. With the proofs furnished by these masterpieces full of earnestness and beauty, a chapter in the history of French and European art will have to be rewritten—not, to be sure, altogether in the sense intended and proclaimed by those who prepared this exceedingly important arrangement.

Comparatively few mediæval French works of art have been preserved to us. The Hundred Years' War, the devastations of the League, and the Great Revolution made a clean sweep of them with fiendish thoroughness. With the châteaux, abbeys, and monasteries, their contents so far as works of art were concerned also perished. What survived

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has up to now appeared to a pre-conceived idea scarcely native. One historian of art wrote after another, that, up to the period of the Renaissance, the plastic artists who worked in France came partly from the Low Countries, partly from Italy, but were only quite exceptionally, if at all, Frenchmen. From a geographical standpoint, we might speak of a French mediæval art ; but from the nature and form of the work, on the other hand, we should admit only a Flemish or Italian, but no French art.

This view is no longer defensible. France, too, had, in the Middle Ages, her own artists and schools of art, and if she also offered hospitality to foreign talent, she was not dependent on it. The strong, creative genius that developed in Northern France from the prosaic semi-circular arch of the Byzantine style the pointed-arch poetry of the Gothic, knew also how to make use of the chisel and paint-brush as means of expression, and to satisfy by painting and carving its impulse for depicting form. The mediæval art of France is not inferior to any other. It must no longer be treated as a mere appendage of art development in the Low Countries and Lombardy.

To be sure, if the learned compilers of the Exhibition Catalogue—George Lafenestre, Henri Bouchot, Leopold Delisle and other academicians or directors of museums and libraries—claim to have discovered, in the pictures and statues, a particular French

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national feature which distinguishes them clearly from other contemporary works, they are led astray by patriotic prejudice. The works bear the stamp of a period, not of a people. Nothing is more like a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century French work of art than a Flemish or Italian, and *vice versa*. It is noticeable that people have taken Bourdichon's masterpiece, one of the gems of the collection—the portrait of the little Dauphin Charles Roland, to be a work of Memling; and of the most beautiful paintings of one and the same painter—des Moulins—have long ascribed one to Van der Goes, the other to Ghirlandajo.

No; the temperaments of the artists at this period were not differentiated nationally. They are, moreover, not so at the present day either, and if analogies are established between artists of the same origin, they may, in all cases, be naturally explained otherwise than by a common descent. The influence of strong personalities, who influence as prototypes, external successes, which form a current of fashion and incite to imitation, or simply a tenaciously held tradition of a school, in which in a long series of artist generations has grown up, suffice to impress on the art of a country through extensive epochs, a certain family physiognomy, which only a mystically inclined mind will be tempted to refer to race and blood.

Topographical and national classifications have in fact no inward spiritual justification in art, but at

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most a value of convenience, in so far as they render possible external groupings, which facilitate a survey. The whole art of Europe is one. It has developed from the Greek, the tradition of which has remained living through all the centuries, and has crept, from country to country, connecting inseparably all separate national developments with their common origin. The Greeks were the teachers of the Romans, and their inspirations and rules were carried down into the Christian catacombs, and from them blossomed the art of the Middle Ages.

Byzantine artists from the Roman empire of the East itself or from Italy, initiated, at the Court of Charlemagne, the barbarians of the Frankish kingdom in the mysteries of their craft, and carried the Promethean spark, however weakly it glimmered, from Attica to the banks of the Seine and Scheldt, where it did not expire, but, later on, was fanned again to bright flame by the fresh breeze of the Renaissance. The Eastern branch of Greek art withered into actual Byzantism, whose last off-shoots are the Russian icons of to-day. The Church in the East, to suit the fetish-loving views of her superstitious semi-barbarians, attributes to the picture the meaning and value of an idol, and opposes mistrustfully every deviation from the canon which, according to her conception, might weaken the power of the idol. In the West less credence was given to the picture's magical virtue, its form obtained no

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dogmatic consecration, the Church allowed the artist freer movement, and thus development was possible, which broke through the stiff, lifeless rule of the school, and found its way back to the inexhaustible primitive source of Greek art itself, namely, nature.

The emancipation from the Byzantine system is not the work of Cimabue and Giotto, or of an individual at all, but an effort of almost all the artists of Western Europe at the close of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century. The portrait of John II. (1310-64) in the Exhibition, which was painted about 1359, of course *in tempera* on a gold ground, by Girard of Orleans, is of a marvellous realism, unchecked by the slightest restraint of any studied rule. The head in profile, turned towards the left, of the melancholy-looking man in the 'fifties with the long, well-formed nose, the scanty moustache and beard, and the long hair, gleams with warm life. Girard copied his model modestly and truly, without troubling himself about a golden profit, and he could put soul into the portrait of his king in the measure in which he himself felt the latter's inward life.

The awakening of a feeling for nature in art is generally ascribed to the Flemings, particularly to the brothers Van Eyck. That, too, is arbitrary, as a glance at the works of the old Frenchmen, who flourished contemporaneously with the Van Eycks, or even before them, teaches us. The feeling for

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nature was always active in the few with bright eyes and joyous consciousness of life, who dedicated themselves to art from inner impulse. The themes to which the plastic arts had for many centuries to restrict themselves were certainly as unfavourable as possible to a healthy naturalism. The only subjects the painter dared to treat were illustrations of the Old and New Testament, legends of the saints, and the symbols of faith. Scenes of heaven and hell, Biblical miracles, and personification of the dogmas of the Church could assuredly no more be painted from the model than the Holy Ghost, or transubstantiation. And yet nature herself came to her rights in this fundamental representation of the supernatural and what lay outside of nature, for she does not allow herself now to be driven out, even by the violent methods of the pitch-fork spoken of by Horace in a famous verse. Without taking particular thought about it, or with a cunning conscious of its purpose, the artists fashioned their works most foreign to actual life out of elements of reality, and achieved them by nature, truth, and life. For this reason even the earliest miniatures of the manuscripts become a trustworthy source for the history of manners. Because the art-workers of limited capacity, who wrought servilely according to the tradition of their gild, reproduced accurately all the accessories—clothes, weapons, furniture, buildings, and scenery—as they actually saw them.

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The little picture, "The Virgin and Child," which is ascribed to Jean Malouel, and was painted about 1395, and can therefore have owed nothing to the Van Eycks, then in Dijon, and perhaps, too, elsewhere, certainly still quite obscure young people, is of such charming realism that one might rather class it as a *genre* picture than as a sacred picture. The Virgin is making the Child a frock, and is just drawing the thread tight, with the needle turned in a correct horizontal direction, and the child Jesus is amusing Himself by putting His rosy little foot in His Mother's red leather slipper, of enormous size to Him, which she has taken off and placed before her. There is no reason why we should not assume that Malouel—if it was he—gave his patron—perhaps the Duke of Burgundy—his (the artist's) own dear wife and little son as a Holy Family.

In "The Death of the Virgin," of the same school of Burgundy, but about a century later, the apostle, kneeling at the foot of the death-bed and reading his prayer-book devoutly, with a big pair of spectacles on his nose, is, in spite of the pathos of the moment, so natural as to be almost comic. "The Miracle of the Saint," with his head in his hands, who is walking barefoot, by a pupil of Nicolas Froment—perhaps by the master himself—painted, about 1480, at Aix in Provence, attests the painter's most naïve indifference to probability. In the middle of the street where the decapitated saint is walking, and the executioner,

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leaning on his sword, stands dumbfounded, kneel, in measured symmetry, to the right and left of the saint, the founder and his consort; he with four little sons, she with four little daughters in a row, like so many organ-pipes, behind them. The picture of the city is, however, so realistic that even to-day an old corner of Aix is recognisable in it, and the gazers running up or standing in knots and laying their heads together, or hurrying to the windows, are of everlasting human verity.

Exactly the same holds good of the altar decoration, ascribed to John of Orleans (circ. 1374), a wonderful sepia painting on white silk. The sections which depict the Scourging of Christ by two brutal fellows with hang-dog faces, the Carrying of the Cross, with the Mocking of Jesus by the rabble of Jerusalem, and the Entombment, with the Blessed Virgin kissing the corpse, show that striving after truth, which has hitherto been pronounced to be a peculiarity of the Dutch. In the "Martyrdom of a Holy Bishop"—most likely by Jean Malouel (circ. 1400)—the martyr, in mitre and pallium, gazes from a strongly barred prison window, near which an angel kneels, and through the bars of which the Saviour in person administers to him the viaticum. But the castle in the Lombard style—stone rafters and corbels with red tiled spaces—on to the ground-floor of which the oval window opens, may be regarded as an architectural design.

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Nicolas Froment's famous "Burning Thornbush" from Aix Cathedral (1475-6) is entirely fabulous in the middle. A soft, cloud-like, lumpy hill of rock supports a dense group of thick-stemmed trees, the tops of which unite in a kind of gigantic bird's nest, wherein the Virgin and Child sit enthroned. But this miracle, with no measure of reality to gauge it, is framed in a deep landscape with great distances; in which white towns lie by mirroring waters, and thickly-leaved trees rise up from green hills to the bright sky, and in the foreground, beside an angel of Annunciation, sits, surrounded by his drove of wethers and his quaintly posed dog, the white-bearded shepherd with his legs crossed in the most natural posture you could conceive.

In the case of almost all the paintings in the Exhibition, and chiefly of the best of them, this proposition can be repeated. The painter loyally carries out the subject commissioned, treating it faithfully according to the traditional formula; but what is not covered by the formula he shapes with sovereign freedom and an honest joyous realism which is by no means the prerogative of the Dutch and Germans, as has been so long believed, but is to be met with, according to the evidence of this Exhibition, in the same measure in the French.

Sculpture might become crude in the earlier Middle Ages, but it did not cease to be fostered.

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Sculpture in stone or wood was the complement of building, that strongest expression of mediæval energy, ivory - carving, or the jewel of precious metal, the adornment of the altar or the state-rooms in the palace. Painting, on the other hand, after the collapse of the old world, went back to the adornment of books, and from this the great art of wall- and easel-painting was again developed only after the age of the Crusades. This, in many details, betrays its origin from miniature. For a long time it was nothing but an enlarged miniature. The works in the Exhibition show, at any rate up to the last third of the fifteenth century, all the features that distinguish the pictorial ornamentation of the manuscripts: the gold ground, the neat, nay, painful perfection, the gay, unqualified, almost glaring, colours, the equal clearness of objects in the furthest background and in the foreground, the puerile joy in innumerable repeated complicated decorations of the surface, the framing, with richly figured wreaths, ornamental borders, or picture margins. Even the standing formulæ of manuscript miniatures are repeated for centuries in the paintings, viz., the movements of all the personages at the Annunciation, Crucifixion, Entombment, and Ascension. Only towards the end of the fifteenth century does painting fully escape from the still clinging egg-shell of the miniature, and grow accustomed to a large, bold line, and a freedom of composition

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which finally reckons with considerations of distance, and prevails upon itself to neglect comparatively the subsidiary in favour of the essential. The glorious Master of Moulins has, it is clear, no longer the old inherited habit of feeling himself banished to a page in a book. He no longer shows the same somewhat mechanical respect to all work, principal and accessory. In the "Virgin and Child between the Founders," and particularly in the "Nativity" with the twilight landscape in the background, and the fat poodle in front sitting on the kneeling cardinal's mantle, the precedence of values is observed, and the painter reserves his piety and devotion for the noble parts.

The author of these pictures—one of the greatest painters that ever lived—is only known as the Master of Moulins, or the Painter of the Bourbons. His name was probably Jean Perréal, but there is no certainty about it. Only a few definite names have come down to us from the beginnings of modern art. We must search for them in the inventories and account books of princely households or cathedral chapters. The artists did not yet sign their works; they indulged in no dreams of immortality. They did not yet feel they were the supermen, that the Renaissance, later on, made of them, and that, in the estimation of the upper class, especially of its feminine and effeminate portion, they have remained till the present day. They

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were honest and genuine artisans, just like other respectable artisans; and in France they, for the most part, enrolled themselves in the Saddlers' Guild, perhaps because they, like the latter, had originally, as miniature painters, to do with parchment, *i.e.*, a species of leather. They regarded it as a special distinction to be appointed servant,—*valet* or *varlet*—of a prince, on whose commissions for church and palace they lived. Jean Malouel and his pupils, Jacques Cone and Jean Mignot, Jehan Fouquet, his sons Jean and François, and his great pupil Jean Bourdichon, Enguerrand Charonton and Nicolas Froment, perhaps also Perréal and King René the Good (1409-80), are perhaps the only painters whose personality stands out clearly outlined in the dawn of art history before Clouet, and his contemporary Corneille of Lyons. Perhaps a number of forgotten names may yet be dug up from archives. The obscurity of the few who have either been handed down to us, or been rescued from oblivion by industrious investigators in recent years is a heavy injustice. They deserve to shine with the same glory as the most illustrious that Vasari has preserved for us in a work of amusing studio gossip.

Jehan Fouquet stands in a line with the greatest portrait painters of all times. He may be named in the same breath with Holbein—nay, with Velasquez. His portrait of a man in the Liechtenstein Gallery

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at Vienna, which shone as one of the gems of the exhibition, is perhaps the most powerful work that the great master created, and the "Man with the Wine-glass," in the Vienna collection of Count Wilczek, is hardly inferior to it in significance.

Of the numerous suggestions of an artistic, moral, and psychological nature that were the outcome of this unique exhibition, the deepest and most abiding—at least for me—was that one felt the spiritual condition of the artists who created these works on commission and, for the most part, according to precise instructions from princes and prelates, lords and governments of cities. In nearly every one of them is played the great drama of the struggle of souls thirsting for freedom with the fearful oppression of intellect of the darkest Middle Ages. Secret corners and angles, easily overlooked backgrounds of the pictures, suggest already the future art, untrammelled by the world, which will overcome this art of the guilds, with its fixed, dogmatic formulæ. A Fouquet, a Bourdichon, a Clouet who, in kings and princes sees, and paints with horrible realism, poor, sick, ugly, dull fools, stands no longer under the control of royalty. He is inwardly a disrespectful rebel, and is, in his way, a prelude to the procession of the market-women to Versailles, which, two or three centuries later, was destined to overthrow the kingdom. A master of the "Mount Calvary" (1460), who makes the

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holy women and disciples stare with such unmoved, wooden countenances at the Body of Christ, not because he is incapable of painting sorrow-stricken faces—all the details of the painting witness to his artistic power—but because he contemplates the incident with coldness of heart, and expresses his unbelief to the initiate as plainly as the rack and stake of the period allowed. In these early works there is a very soft and very weak rumble of thunder of a very far-off storm. They are a first indistinct announcement of the Revolutions that are slowly preparing.

## V

## A CENTURY OF FRENCH ART

SINCERITY did not rule in all parts of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900, but a quickening air of freedom was breathed in the great palace of art. The temporary proprietors of this colossal building, the French artists, did not pretend to any motive that they did not possess. "Make room! Out of the way! Out!" we fancied we heard from all the dusky corners of the vast halls in a voice of thunder. "Foreigners from both worlds? To the south wing with them! In the corner! Under the staircase! That's quite too good for them. The dead? The famous of yesterday? What do the disturbers want? Haven't they had their share of ribbons, titles, commissions from the State, and other forms of the artist's ideals? Back with you! To the furthermost building in the rear! If any one wants to make journeys of discovery, he can steer away. The chief buildings, the foregrounds, the splendid halls for us, the *chers*

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*maitres* of to-day. We are the strongest, therefore we need do no violence to our feelings. We are alive, therefore we are right."

Certainly, certainly. I do not contradict this; but it suits my inclination to wander past the conquerors of the day to the shadows in the back premises, into the remote and also, as to equipment, significantly neglected halls of the Century Exhibition, to the great vault in which is collected that which was to make plain the development of French art from the Revolution to Carnot, the grandson. What remains when the human being who gives dinners, haunts antechambers, has cousins in the Ministry of the Fine Arts, whispers malice in one's ear, ceases to acknowledge greetings, and writes flattering letters, has fallen to dust; when rivals and parasites have disappeared; when the puffs of toadies, and the no less valuable ones of envious men and poison-boilers, are hushed and forgotten?

Not much, and there lies the melancholy humour of such wanderings through the realm of shadows. The only feature that always wounded me somewhat in the "Divine Comedy," is that Dante awards his curses and execrations on the departed according to the rank they occupied among the living. The invectives on the poor soul of a pope have three stripes, those on a prince, two, and on a lord, one. That is an inartistic forgetfulness of the frame chosen by Dante for his poem. If he remained always

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mindful of his programme of death and hell, he would not be able to distinguish crowns or purple mantles in the red illumination of the under-world. The laughing and sighing philosophy of Hamlet—alas, poor Yorick!—stands higher than the resentful fury of the passionate Italian, who makes the hierarchy overstep the threshold of the grave. It is perhaps the most profound usage of the French language that they deprive the dead of the “Monsieur,” to which every living man, with the exception of those criminally prosecuted and condemned, has a claim. The dead has no longer a title—so much more sorry a fate for him, if, when he was alive, he was nothing more than a title.

The practice is even here somewhat different from the pure theory. The deceased is no longer “Excellency,” “Professor,” not even “Mr.” But the usage of contemporaries to give him a title is still expressed in the respectful tone in which they pronounce his now naked name, and in which one possessed with a delicate sense of hearing perceives the rustle of all the tinsel that surrounded him when alive. In this tone, however, the name becomes familiar to the younger ones, who, without thinking, continue this veneration, unconscious that their accent expresses respect because the bearer of the name so pronounced was once a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour and an Academician. Thus, my dear Schiller, are your confident words to be under-

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stood, you who would never perceive the weft of vulgarity in the ways of man: "He who has satisfied the best men of his time has lived for all time." Certainly, if by "best" we would understand the best placed, best paid, invested with the best office, or the best decorated. He who during his lifetime has belonged to those favoured by the grace of official newspapers, who has been gauged by them and provided with a "full" mark, will be recognised for all time as full without further test. The Pantheon is the continuation of the minister's official rooms, the golden book of spiritual history an anthology from the Official Gazette and the Army List, for the use of the children of later centuries. If I must emphasise the essential: the appraisement even of the artist, therefore of the most individual man that exists, is the outcome of social, not individual, factors, or of the latter only when they are socially successful, and, therefore, themselves become social factors. There are, I admit, always proud — perhaps only haughty — natures with an anarchistic, anti-social trait, who will not recognise any arrangement or fixing of the community, not even its hierarchy of fame, and clench their fists against laurel crowns just as they do against crowns. Their rebellion, however, is seldom successful. I know of no case of a bomb-thrower having destroyed a Pantheon.

But as we do not take ourselves tragically, do

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not begin our own verdict with the threatening formula, "In the name of the Law," and do not exact any submission from others, we are always entitled to be of our own opinion, and to let the dead influence us without prejudice, untroubled by the distinctions of rank which were bestowed on them in life, and were buried with them. Such a method of observation is unhistorical, but subjectively fruitful; it leads to self-emancipation from many superstitions.

The Century Exhibition of French painting was far from being complete; it was incomparably more fragmentary than the Louvre Museum, which is also not without gaps. But it afforded a general view of the art development of the period represented, and it gave the independent man the chance of correcting numerous opinions which had taken hold of him from study and reading.

It began with the masters who created and flourished before the deluge of 1789—Watteau, Greuze, Fragonard, Vigée-Lebrun. The three first had, for two generations, sunk deeply in general estimation. Then the force of fashion raised them up again to dizzy heights of fame. I do not believe that they will maintain themselves there. It pleases the reactionaries to glorify the *ancien régime* at the expense of the Revolution, and to this planned and deliberate toil belongs also the unmeasured overestimate of eighteenth century art and artistic work. But it is politics, not æsthetics—no taste for art, but

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a tendency. In reality, the darlings of the age of the Pompadour and Louis XVI. were petty masters, mere fillings of a particular frame, and, lifted out of this, they lose their best qualities.

Watteau still holds his ground most easily, for he is an amiable teller of stories that are agreeable if nothing of a more serious character occupies one's mind. He draws elegantly, although without pedantry; his colouring is cheerful, and suits admirably his hushed, silken carpets, coquettish Gobelins, and light lacquered furniture. He is the painter of joyous days wherein life seems an eternal feast. Gracious spring bedecks the earth, his men and women are all young and handsome, his ladies wear entrancing toilettes and *coiffures*, and his gentlemen silk doublets and lace shirt-frills. Even if they dress as shepherds, they are laughingly addressed thus: "I know you, fair masque; you are a marquis in disguise with your charming friend, the duchess." Rosy angels hover about them, and mingle familiarly in their pastimes. They have nothing on earth to do except pay each other witty compliments and play at love. I understand why American multi-millionaires pay any price to be surrounded by Watteaus. It is really honourable to the artists of our time that the Trust magnates have not yet succeeded in finding or rearing painters who would flatter their egotism through servile suggestions of a Watteau aspect of the world.

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Fragonard appears in a secondary position besides Watteau. He is drier, and with less "swing." He is not really present in his heart at the pastimes he paints. Watteau is himself a guest at his festivals; Fragonard takes part in the *soirées* only under a sealed order. The former amuses himself, the latter amuses the person who gives him the commission.

Greuze lives on the fame bestowed on him by the grateful Diderot. He was enthusiastic for Diderot's tearful *bourgeois* tragedy, and Diderot repaid him with enthusiasm for his painting; but we have no longer any grounds, I suppose, for regarding him with Diderot's eyes. When he paints his eternal model of the "Broken Pitcher" in the Louvre, and of his sundry counterparts of it in the Century Exhibition, he is pitilessly pretty. When he sets great dramatic scenes in the Diderot style on the stage—the "Village Betrothal," the "Father's Curse," etc.—he is depressingly melodramatic. His young maiden is marvellously pretty and tame, and will always delight childlike spectators with the charm of her blooming girlhood. He suffered himself to be infected in Italy by Guido Reni's sweetness, and only transplanted his soft beauties, rolling their eyes, from paradise to the middle-class earth. He is simply the Bouguereau of his age. That name comprises all that can be said of him in praise or blame. Greuze is Bouguereau's superior in so far as he paints more vigorously, and forms his pretty

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*ingénues* of real flesh — not, like Bouguereau, of alabaster and sugar-candy.

Beside the softness of Greuze, Madame Vigée-Lebrun seems a man and a fighter. In a century of gallantry she alone was not gallant. She painted women's likenesses, and did not pay court to her models; but she elevated them, and gave them meaning. Where the male painters of the period saw only beauty-patches, she suspected she saw a soul. If we look at these women with curiously poised heads, gazing boldly out of their frames, they say proudly and calmly: "I am no trying-on hand; I am no creature of luxury; I am no flesh for lust; I am a personage." At a distance of a hundred years Vigée-Lebrun is a forerunner of the now innumerable American painters of emancipated womanhood. This brave woman, who was beautiful, and did not overprize, nay, hardly prized her beauty, was an asserter of women's rights long before the word or the thing was invented.

Prudhon was represented by a "Zephyr," which has the same peculiarities as his "Crucifixion" and "Crime and Punishment" in the Louvre. He models a human body so that one must take one's hat off to it. He has the infallible feeling of the great Spaniards for the value of light and shade; but what will always stand in the way of his being loved and not merely respected is his hatred of colour. He confines himself to a strict black and white style,

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which banishes all gladness and discourages the most willing admiration.

And now the great deluge breaks in, and, like a sea-god David emerges over the raging waves. It is really with him that the century begins, for what preceded him was the art of the *ancien régime* and of the Trianon. He had at the Exhibition a "Distribution of the Colours," an "Ugolino," some portraits; all of the most genuine David in choice of subject as well as treatment. Everywhere the capricious "seeing yellow" which seems to have been a peculiarity of his eye; everywhere the grandly imposing, professorial infallibility of drawing which knows no first trying, no anxious searching, no hot struggle with the never quite attainable Nature. David compels with an imperious Medusa-glance the ever-stirring, the ever-flowing, so that it becomes fixed, and he can shackle the now immovable vision in brazen outlines. So his human beings appear statues, or mimes, which maintain a pose, and his most blameless anatomies acquire a tendency towards the artificial. David's mood is always uniformly high-pitched. Good-humoured people, who would like to see the majestic man in shirt sleeves for once, lurk in vain for him to unbutton himself. He never forsakes the decoration and costume of high tragedy. At first he sought the drama in ancient history or world-famed poetry. Afterwards, he found it in his immediate surroundings. Fate vouchsafed him the

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favour of living in a time, the pathos of which was mightier than that of Athens, Sparta, or Rome. He satisfied his deepest longings when, in the "Sabine Women," he preached to the murderous factions among his people reconciliation and brotherly love, and, in "The Distribution of the Colours" and the "Coronation," he made Napoleon the equal of the heroes of mythology. He is, therefore, always genuine, even when he may seem to the superficial gaze theatrical. It is the difference between a tone naturally sustained during moments of life at high pressure, and declamation learnt from a teacher of rhetoric.

His pupils, imitators, and rivals have, on the contrary, not succeeded in avoiding declamation. Gérard, Gros, Riesener, and Drolling were, consciously or unconsciously, the greatest flatterers that ever painted portraits. Because David represented Napoleon in the character of an Alexander of Macedon, or an ancient god of war, the others, the smaller painters, in their portraits gave to even the ordinary men of the period the deportment of Olympian gods. Only Gérard's "Letitia," who, too, bore apotheosis most easily, is a good modest human being. All the other women are Juno or Pallas Athene; all the men Mars or Achilles. The contrast between the commonplace physiognomies and the magnificence of their appearance is now and then so violent that one is led to surmise

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that the painter wanted to make fun of his models. "Charles X. in his Coronation Robes," by Ingres, seems, for example, virtually a parody of David's "Coronation of Napoleon."

Géricault stands an examination of his title to fame badly. He has not so correct an eye for the figures of horses as was believed before instantaneous photographs. His portraits of soldiers are really more crude than powerful. Even the sketch for the "Raft of the Medusa," reveals evidence of straining after effect which our pious admiration refused to notice in the colossal work in the Louvre. On the other hand, the figure of Louis Leopold Boilly gained strangely in the Century Exhibition. Up till then I knew only his "Arrival of a Diligence at a Posting-house," in the Louvre, and I did not rate him very highly on account of the affected *atelier* light of this otherwise prettily studied little picture. Here he disclosed himself as a great philosopher and satirist. One picture represents a popular merry-making with wine *gratis*, another a free performance at the Ambigu-Comique Theatre. There the crowd is fighting murderously over a drink that can be had for nothing ; half-grown hobbledehoys throttle bestial greybeards ; bullies claw hold of furies ; dreadful feet trample on faces and necks in the mad storming of the wine supplies, and the victors in this struggle have their reward : they lie on the ground bestially drunk. The scenes at the entrance of the theatre are

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not quite so vulgar. There is a less dogged scramble for intellectual enjoyment than for that of the palate. Yet here, too, the most brutal lack of consideration and greedy selfishness triumph ; here, too, the strong man overmasters the weak ; here, too, among beings who seem to belie their human form, the law of the jungle holds good ; and here, too, poor people pay for a little doubtful pleasure with the sufferings, dangers, and exertions of a storming of the Malakoff. In the foreground of both pictures stands a group of well-dressed persons who, half in pity, half in disgust, look at the disorderly pushing of the rabble from a respectful distance. These rich people have the *rôle* of teaching the moral of the fable. They express the sociological thought of the painter. Boilly deplores the low moral condition of the masses, and reproaches the dominant class with having degraded them to beasts, when it pretends to give them a feast. He rejects with utter disdain the dogma of equality, yet without haughtiness, for he has for the disinherited the somewhat condescending, yet warm pity of a genuine patrician. These are extremely modern—I might call them Toynbee-feelings—and they are expressed with an exact, judicious brush that can conjure forth the confused turmoil of a great, raging multitude, and, nevertheless, remain faithful in all details. Boilly was decidedly a master.

The Century Exhibition also gave the opportunity

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for a discovery, not only to me, but also to all who brought to it an open mind. There is a painter, Trutat, of whom no one had ever heard anything. Seekers who investigated the provincial newspaper of 1840-60 succeeded in discovering one or two articles about him. That is all. He once or twice exhibited in the "Salon," but the "Salon" reports of the time make no mention of him. He lived in the first half of the last century, and died at the age of twenty-four. Before his picture—one single picture—men were amazed, and women stood with moist eyes. It is a double picture; in the foreground, a fair young man, pale with sickness, with deep blue eyes and a proud, wild mane; his firm forehead full of impatient dreams of joyous creations, fame, and happiness, yet, in his hollow cheeks, faint shadows of death. Behind him, half obscured in dusk, a woman's profile, his mother's head; a good Samaritan with tender gaze, and lips closed in sadness, which once sang cradle-songs, but have learnt silence in the sick-room. In its composition there is a reminiscence of Ary Scheffer's "St Augustin and St Monica," in the Louvre. But it is incomparably more profound, for Trutat depicts himself, not saints whom the power of imagination has first to bring before him. The painting is wonderful, firm and full as that of Franz Hals—I deliberately utter this strong statement—so surely and organically matured that one traces beneath the skin all the

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most delicate muscles and bones. And add to this technique, of which one does not discern how he could have acquired it in a fleeting morning of life, the intensity of feeling which has raised the work to the rank of those high creations in which a soul is revealed. The picture is full as a swan's song, of foreboding and love. The great youth does not understand himself alone, without his mother—the dear mother must be with him, if he goes out to the market among people. Shall she nurse him? Shall she protect him? Can he dispense with her for a moment as he must be taken away from her so soon? All this is in that mysterious picture, and it was in it when Trutat, though he did not know it, painted his own requiem. Only nobody then understood the riddle; Trutat as little as the rest. He is another Regnault, only a still more genuine one. And no one has made lamentation about him, although his tragedy is more painful than Regnault's. For the latter attained immortality in the apotheosis of death in battle, whilst miserable consumption slew Trutat ingloriously.

The Romantic fever begins to seize the century. The painters hasten to hang round them the botanical box, and seek the blue flower. The first to go forth into the moon-illumined, witching night was Chassériau! Poor Chassériau! It would have better suited his bent to paint *salons* with rich Empire-furniture, wherein respectably dressed

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citizens sit with their wives and daughters, and pleasantly tell each other the anecdotes of the day. His portrait of the two sisters in red shawls and yellow plaited dresses shows this — a neat, pretty, *bourgeois* painting, which denies itself all enthusiasm, and all soaring. But now the tarantula stings him, and he occupies himself only with obsolete subjects such as Orpheus, *châtelaines*, fairy-tale princesses with black slaves, Macbeth and the three witches. The last picture is particularly characteristic of him. The three witches have their white beards and pointed noses, as prescribed by the romantic code; but they are merely grotesque, but not in the least weird. We have the impression that they have met in a peaceful country in order to gossip about their neighbours, and make coffee. They publicly proffer the knight, who should be Macbeth, a small bowl. The heath by night lacks every trace of mood; the ugly old women every touch of the demoniac. Chassériau painted, just as J. Fr. Kind—the [“Freischütz”] Kind —wrote poetry.

I am afraid I must likewise be guilty of heresy in respect of another great man; but Delacroix, too, fails to justify the idolatry people have displayed and, to some extent, still display towards him. I do not misjudge his joyous coloriture, although his harmonies are rather loud than grand. I am not blind to the characteristic mobility of his composi-

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tion, although it is generally far more a stagey flourish than assertion of strength in the service of a will conscious of what it is aiming at. What excites in me, however, unconquerable opposition is his phrasing. If any art demands intuition it is painting. Delacroix, however, usually has not exercised intuition, but has clothed with the cool work of his brain abstract thoughts in conventional forms. For this, look at "Greece expiring on the Ruins of Missalonghi"—a picture which was once of enormous influence and highly praised. On some disordered masonry stands a young lady in the *bal masqué* dress of a Greek, who has no thought of giving up the ghost, but is playing a part in robust health, and will change her dress, and have supper later. At some distance behind her we catch sight of a young negro in the uniform of a Janissary, climbing a rubbish heap, brandishing a flag with a crescent on it, and a curved sabre. This slightly painted Turkish warrior appears not to see the young Greek girl; at all events he does nothing to her, and does not even threaten her. There is no association between the two figures; the action is disconnected. At most the Turk is interesting as an acrobat or banner-swing. No murderous propensities are noticeable in him. The countenance of the Greek lady is pale and weary; but a rest in bed seems the only thing she needs. It says much for the keenness of their Philhellenism that this picture

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could move the people of the period. Delacroix had, however, no intuition at all when he painted it ; he only illustrated an unplastic, insipid phrase.

His other paintings are mostly illustrations of a text. "Comedians and Buffoons" were unmistakably suggested by Victor Hugo. Confused ideas occur to him. Thus "The Good Samaritan" was not painted to the passage in the Gospel, but to a story of chivalry ; for the gentle benefactor takes the sick man on his charger—he is a mounted Samaritan!—just as a knight takes the noble lady he is carrying off.

Delacroix was a literary painter ; we know that from his correspondence ; but without that, his pictures would betray it. He read much more in books than in nature, and he supplied paintings that gave evidence of education and much reading, in which the art-hating, blind-souled Philistines of education delight royally. It may be that the confusion of his portrayal and the loudness of his palette was felt by his contemporaries as a deliverance from the coldness and precision of David's school. I suspect, however, his earliest admirers valued him chiefly because he fed on the same books, plays, and newspapers as themselves.

Ary Scheffer stands in the same spiritual plane as Delacroix, but lacks the keenly joyous colour and the theatricality of his stage-setting. Schubert's songs and Schumann's are music even without the

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lyric text, and what music! I cannot imagine what Ary Scheffer's pictures from Shakespeare, Goethe, and Byron would be without the poets and their poems. His picture in the Century Exhibition, "The Dead ride fast," is, if I exclude from my conception my remembrance of Bürger's ballad, an almost touching example of tastelessness. Leonora's dishevelled hair, blown by the wind into a stiff, horizontal position, is supposed, for instance, to illustrate the swiftness of the ride—a notion which may have seemed to Scheffer terrible, but is comic.

Horace Vernet had a "Mazepa," of course a big modern battle, and several likenesses. He is as popular as on the first day, and will always remain so as long as children play with tin soldiers and the picture sheets of Epinal—the French Neu-Ruppin—find a ready sale. How he dazzles! He does so to a degree which deserves admiration. From a distance his pictures appear to be something; one must look at them quite closely to see that they are nothing, absolutely nothing. The colossal canvas is apparently full of men: thousands of soldiers march, encamp, storm, fight; but, as a matter of fact, not a single figure is painted; the whole pomp of war and victory is composed of little stencilled gingerbread men, without any bones in their bodies, and with scarcely the remotest resemblance to human beings. Could Horace Vernet draw? Had he really any other conception of the human

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form than that of an inflated india-rubber figure? In Paris and Versailles I have seen many paintings by him, but I cannot yet answer these questions. Horace Vernet is the fourth of a dynasty of painters: the first, Antoine, was great at little figures on sedan-chair panels; the second, Joseph, painted the well-known series of French harbours; the third, Carle, is a master in depicting horses; Horace, the fourth, is the weakest of them all, incomparably inferior in ability to his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He alone, however, has attained fame, and his renown throws his ancestors into the shade. The wheel of fortune now and then plays immoral jokes of this sort, perhaps in order to teach its own futility.

Daumier was known to me and, I suppose, most people, only as a draughtsman. We learnt now to prize him as a painter of high rank. His numerous paintings are illustrations to "Don Quixote," romantic merry-Andrews, street-singers, Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*, and a crowded group of lawyers in cap and gown. His manner is the same in oil as in lead-pencil and crayon-drawing: his lines of movement broad and firm, the outlines blunted, and now and again rubbed; all his figures mysteriously surrounded in mist, yet all so clearly and faultlessly represented that one is never led to suspect that their mysteriousness is a trick to hide carelessness or lack of skill. Even his oil-painting is really

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caricature, but discreet caricature. The nobler method instils into him self-respect, and preserves him from caricature; he just marks roguishly the burlesque features, but does not diverge from reality. Thus his lawyers are portraits, but they look so maliciously intelligent, so inexorably penetrating, that we can doubt of this or that head whether it is a likeness or a caricature. Let us say this: the model will take it for a caricature, but his friends will regard it as a portrait. Daumier is a solitary; he is akin to none of his contemporaries, yet an example of the migration of souls; for in him Hogarth comes to life again, but a Hogarth who for his part would be animated by a spark of Rembrandt's spirit.

Suddenly another solitary appears in the ranks of the allied men of school and tradition, viz., Millet. Precipitation would infer: the romantic is overcome; a new generation with new modes of feeling arises; the nerves of the century begin to vibrate according to a new rhythm. That is sheer nonsense; nothing has been overcome. The romantic masters still form romantic pupils, the crowd still feels in the traditional way; the range of themes and the fashion of treating them remain what they have been for a generation, but amidst the dependent, the docile ones, the imitator forms for himself, by the law of elective affinity, a divergent group—the group of the forest-folk of Barbizon—and amidst this group

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steps forth an individual man who forgets the master's *atelier*, who, in painting, thinks of neither the *salon* nor the art-dealers, who looks not into books and newspapers nor on prototypes, but out into the world, and on that account falls completely out of the century.

If we follow up the development of art in the Exhibition, we may easily fall into the error of thinking that with Millet one epoch closes and another begins. Such was not the case in reality. The contemporaries who appreciated Millet were a diminishing few. Official art despised him. There were no distinctions for him on the part of the State. The critical phrase-makers knew nothing of him or mocked him horribly. The rich connoisseurs passed him by. A very small congregation of moderately well-off admirers, whose valuation appraised their most honest admiration at 1,000 francs at most, bought his pictures at prices which just made it possible for him to live in Barbizon in wooden shoes and a blouse, and to bring up his numerous family on potatoes and bacon. But as he was a personality he succeeded — though only after his death. He made a school, like every one who has something to teach. He gained influence on the views of the creators, the critics, and the public. People began to understand his speech, nay, to feel that what he said was beautiful. But to this day there is no Millet epoch in French art,

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and his fame is really an optical delusion. His works did not bring him into the mouth of the masses, but the caprice of a millionaire. On the day when it occurred to M. Chauchard to pay 600,000 francs for Millet's "Angelus," snobs of both worlds took off their hats and murmured in a voice hushed with reverence: "That must be a great painter." As we see, the world's fame is but a question of money. Many more men are able to reckon than are able to feel the beauty of art, and, to the vast majority, its price is the infallible, the one key to the understanding of a work.

I must say that the millionaire who acted as Millet's herald of fame, had no sense of proportion. If the work of an artist is to be measured by a gauge, the figures of which represent gold coins, Millet does not reach the altitude of 600,000 francs, unless we estimate at least thirty of his contemporaries equally high. In technique, Millet follows the Dutch; a David Teniers without humour and without aim at humour. His landscape, never the essential with him, is poorer than that of Rousseau and François, not to speak of Corot. His greatness lies in his personality, in his simplicity, in his avoidance of pose, in the pious earnestness with which he follows the daily toil of the field labourer. That is no new note in art, but it is the manifestation of an individuality. Many are his superiors purely

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as painters. But souls cannot be compared and measured: they are incommensurable.

Courbet follows on Millet. Those mad on systematising have classed the two together as pioneers of Naturalism. What blindness to the essential! If anything does connect them—according to the Hegelian method—it is their very antithesis. Millet—let us think of the “Man with the Mattock,” “The Gleaners,” even “The Pig-Killing,” and the two pictures in the Century Exhibition: the field-labourer, who, his day’s work ended, is putting on his coat, and the mother feeding her little child with pap, as well as “The Angelus”—Millet indicates, in heavy painting and little-pleasing colours, in people whose coarse externals do not attract a spirituality that ennobles them and makes us forget their soil-stained smock-frocks and their hard features. Courbet, on the other hand, draws faultlessly, and is master of every knack of the trade; but, with his rich means, he never gets above the spiritual stage of photography, and he knows not how to open to us the smallest corner of the moral and spiritual being of his men and women.

But, strangely enough, this same Courbet, who never conceives human beings except as soulless forms, can put a soul into nature and her lower-conditioned life. His justly famed “Sea-Waves” breathes a dramatic will-power. His “Roes in the Wood” are spirited. Ancient, mysterious wisdom

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appears to possess even his trees. Animals and plants, sea and land, speak in Courbet; man alone is dumb. He is a pantheist who excludes only man from the All-Divine. That is pessimism rooted in the most profound unconsciousness, which hints at serious organic disturbance.

Rosa Bonheur, represented by a wonderful "Team of Oxen before a Hay Waggon," is in this respect akin to Courbet. She, too, is an eloquent advocate of the beauty and profound feeling of the brute; but, more logical than Courbet, she confines herself to representing animals, and does not meddle with human beings. Man fails to interest her; she takes no heed of his indifferent appearance. The animal alone attracts her attention. A Rudyard Kipling of the brush, she has painted all her life the "Jungle-Book," that tells of the wise and good and honest beasts, and the cunning men. Sir Edwin Landseer was also an animal-painter, but of quite another sort than Rosa Bonheur. When Landseer wanted to flatter the beasts, he gave them human qualities. Rosa Bonheur would have felt she was insulting her dear animals, if she had painted a picture like the "Diogenes" in the National Gallery in London. The humanising of animals seems to her like degrading their special animal beauty. Her love of animals was morbid; it was, however, a deep and powerful emotion that made of her a great artist.

Our wandering through the Century Exhibition led

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us finally past the great landscape-men, the founders of modern landscape-painting, to Manet and Monet, Renoir and Degas, with whom a new century of art begins. In a later section on the Caillebotte room in the Luxembourg Museum, I shall study closely the authors of the Open Air Movement. The fight against the children of classicism and romance was furious, and "free-light" was victorious in the degree in which it deserved victory. But even in those days of turmoil there were idyllists who remained undisturbed by the tumult, and did not notice it. Gustave Moreau painted his colour stories from a palette of gold and precious stones, from a palette of Limosin and the glass-painters of Gothic cathedrals, as if there had never existed an "Olympia" of Manet or a "Funeral Procession of Ornans," of Courbet. The high importance of Moreau, to whom I return in a special study, lies in the fact that he teaches us the feebleness of all classification of art development into epochs. True artists are not subject to time, and move side by side without influencing reciprocally their orbits. They are not subject to Newton's law of gravitation.

The Century Exhibition taught us something more. It sharpened our sight for distinguishing between the literary painters and the painters proper. The former, as a rule, find fame quicker than the latter, but their fame affects posterity as

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a bad jest. They are illustrators of the time, and what it brings, that is the worthless, art-destroying "actuality." Every attempt to put painting at the service of contemporary thought, to demand of it philosophical collaboration in the development of political, moral, and social doctrines, is a sin against an art whose essence directs it to the eternal aspects of the phenomenal world. Only those are genuine painter temperaments which can follow reflectively the play of light on surfaces in motion, and tell us what feelings this play awakens in them. All symbolism, all allegory, all graphic accompaniment of poetry, is weak. Only what has been really seen has permanence, even if it is reproduced with little skill. You cannot paint from hearsay, only from the impressions which the eye takes in, and the soul delivers. It is astonishing that so primitive a biological truth should be so difficult to grasp.

## VI

## THE SCHOOL OF 1830

THOMY THIÉRY was a rich man of the formerly French, but afterwards English, island of Mauritius, who lived and died in Paris, and left his art collection, consisting of paintings, Barye bronzes, and some Gobelins, to the Louvre. Thomy Thiéry was a man of a single passion and a single thought; he loved only the Barbizon School and some of its artistic contemporaries who, in his opinion, stood in an elective affinity to it; but he loved them with unshaken fidelity and constant self-sacrifice. And in contrast to other more eclectic amateurs, he did not perform his heroic deeds of an undaunted purchaser in auction rooms and art-shops, but carried his money to the studios of the living and struggling as long as he was able, and appeared on the market as an ordinary collector only when the brush had slipped from the hand of the creators. In this way his gallery got the warmth and unity of an organic being, and besides its beauty, gave joy through the

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idea that it was not the result of *parvenu* vanity, or of that cruel fancy that takes satisfaction in a work without troubling about the originator, but that a grateful patronage, which not only wishes to purchase art treasures, but also to lighten and beautify the artist's earthly pilgrimage, had created it. As a legacy to the Louvre, the collection has from a fraction become an integral section that methodically dovetails into its place in the frame of this incomparable museum, in which the history of art is made to live before our gaze in select examples. The management has added the pictures which it formerly possessed of Thomy Thiéry's favourites, so that the three halls of the collection now afford a good survey of the fruitful movement, which, about 1830, took place in French painting, and diverted it from the degraded classicism then dominant into the path pursued at present.

The School of Barbizon! A convenient, but, for that very reason, a meaningless, expression. The men comprised in this commonplace designation have not much in common. In age not far apart, they were bound to each other by personal friendship, and partly inhabitants of that Fontainebleau wood, in which some of them experienced Nature's revelation. They were, however, very different in temperament, genius, and impulse, and they strove for personal ideals with dissimilar modes of expression. Only one peculiarity belongs in like degree

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to all, viz., the burning longing with which they yearned to get out of the stupid hole-in-the-wall of the academic studio that had become to them a goal into freedom and life.

Without punning, the free air and freedom meant to them the same thing. Landscape furnished them with the means of renewing their acquaintance with Nature. Under a completely Faust-like impulse, they struggled out of the *atelier*, where, "in reek and decay, only the skeletons of brutes and dead men's bones" surrounded them, "into the far country." Their appearance about the time of the July Revolution was the Easter-morning walk after brooding in the Gothic studio.

The David tradition held painting in thrall. The master's greatest pupil, Baron Gros, and, with him, the gifted Géricault, sought to overcome the stiff mummifiedness and dryness of forms, the staginess of subject of this art, which found its triumph in the "Rape of the Sabine Women" and the "Coronation at Notre Dame." But Géricault, misjudged and undervalued, died early a conquered man, and Gros, going astray in uncertain sounding of himself, returned, after his short revolt, to the tin and paste formulary of his first epoch, recognised in alarm its hollowness, and, by voluntary death in the Seine, got rid of the pains of the sceptic who has lost his faith and his ideal. The then young generation, warned and shaken by the tragedy of this

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seeker who found nothing, broke with the dominant rule, and sat down at the feet of Nature, to learn from her.

The country is the great master-workshop. There Nature speaks her most eloquent language of form. There she finds the tones that awaken the loudest echo in the soul of the genuine born painter. The creation of a pictorial artist is, like each of the higher mental activities, very complicated; the most opposed organs of the brain have a variously graded and mixed share in it. The vivid reception and rendition of a phenomenon at rest, of the expressive line of one in motion, is an exercise of the motor centres. In the representation of man, or what pertains to man, which is, directly or indirectly, through the awakening of anthropomorphic ideas, to seize on our minds, trains of thought, reason, and judgment play a part by the side of the emotions growing out of the unconscious. But the real and essential element in painting is neither the motorial production of the drawing, nor the travail of thought in the composition, but is ever the giving of light and colour. Now what counts in landscape is the effect of light and colour. Here the painter stands before the magic changes of lights and the alluring colour-mysteries of Nature, which excite him most keenly; for they stimulate his optical centre, of which the extraordinary development and particular susceptibility of light is the psycho-physical basis

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and preliminary condition of the primitive, impulsive gift of painting. Ever when men of talent feel the stiffened traditions of the schools to be intolerable, and want to follow their own inward impulse, they flee to the country in order, in its free light, to wash themselves clean from the dust of the schools, and bathe into health their limbs, aching from constrained positions. There is profound instruction in the fact that to Giotto, in his effort completely to burst the fetters of Byzantinism, which his master, Cimabue, had already strongly shaken, it first occurred to introduce into his work the elements of landscape. His picture in the Louvre of St Francis of Assisi is a touchingly *naïve* example of this.

It was Corot who first uttered in the French painting of the nineteenth century the creative words, "Let there be light." Of course, he did not discover day, for there were masters before him in whose pictures the sun shone. We find in Ruysdael the keen, chilly clearness of a northern sky. Claude Lorrain gives warm, tender evening tones of the south, which have the effect of luxurious warm baths. From him, Turner directly traces his descent, who overheats Claude's pleasant tepidity to a glow, and raises his gentle clearness to a blinding splendour of radiancy. But no one before Corot has understood, like him, how to fill pictures with such discreet yet penetrating, delicate yet glowing light. It is no melodramatic, no Bengal or concocted light, no

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light of strange, exceptional occasions, of confusing colours, no vulgar, pompous, excessively brilliant light, but a restfully even, inexhaustibly rich, cheerful light that fills the soul with joy and hope.

Corot's light sheds its rays from a hopeful soul. It is luminous optimism in visible form. Some years ago, a Corot Exhibition took place in the Galliera Museum, and those who arranged it contrived to collect about the whole of the master's life-work. I looked attentively at one point: it contained hardly a single evening, not a single autumn note or muttering of a storm, but only morning and spring and blue sky. That is characteristic of this child of the sun. In Corot the elements of beauty are nearly always the same: pleasant hill-countries, winding paths that lead to weird distances and invite our yearning to fare thither; at a curve of the road gleaming water mirroring silver cloudlets; in the foreground delicately-leaved trees; around and over everything the wondrous air thrilling with light, animated with a thin haze of mist, in which, bewitched by the feeling of spring, by an association of ideas, we fancy we can hear the soft bell-notes of invisible church towers, the twitter of pairing birds engaged in building their nests, and the buzz of early beetles. Some of the Corots in the Thiéry rooms, *e.g.*, the view of the Coliseum, are youthful productions, and do not yet show the dreamily soft, as it were, inspired style and silver glow of his

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maturity. They are still somewhat dry and hard, yet, even in these more prosaic pictures, the heart-quicken<sup>g</sup> light falls from heaven—Corot's incomparable strength.

Corot did not belong to the forestmen of Barbizon, but he was the founder of their religion of light. Th. Rousseau shares with him the silkiness, and approaches him in the down-like delicacy of his young foliage. Daubigny has more temperament; he is sturdier, more manly, perhaps I should say: more like a peasant. What raises him to the rank of master is the depth of his pictures, and his gift of working out his subjects in almost stereoscopic relief, in all planes—in the fore-, middle-, and back-ground. His "Skiff" is, therefore, an excellent example. The mast of the vessel stands absolutely free. We see how air is encompassing it on all sides. Dupré shares in equal degree the praise of his two friends. That is not quite just, for he has by no means so much personality as they. He does not feel originally, but imitatively. Nature moves him first through the eyes of his companions in art. He imitates alternately the softness of Corot's foliage and his silvery mistiness, Rousseau's smoothness and insinuating harmony of colour, and Daubigny's tree-poetry, but I look in vain for the feature that distinguishes him from the others.

The delicate, and at the same time reverential love with which the Barbizon-men treat the individual

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tree, Troyon expends on domestic animals. As to the former the tree, so long as it does not melt in the haze of distance, is never merely part of the scheme, but a distinct, living being, possessing a physiognomy of its own, of which they render a strongly individualised likeness; so the latter regards animals with the understanding of a shepherd, who is known to recognise by their countenances all the sheep of a numerous flock. He will correctly depict the physiognomy of animals, without any propensity to giving them the look of human beings, through which animal painters only too easily become, without intending it, comic.

Millet is the continuation and consummation of the great landscape painters of 1830. We are not conscious of this if we regard him only by himself; but it is at once forced on us if we see him in the Thiéry Collection in connection with his comrades. Millet is also, fundamentally, a landscape painter, only his landscapes are animated by men; but not by men who are accessories, as is the case with Corot, but by men who are a part of the landscape, its most important and essential part, precisely as the trees and clouds are, but more dignified and spiritual than trees or clouds. With him man grows together with his rural environment, is himself a bit of nature in the midst of nature, and it is not easy to decide whether he is degrading man, or is elevating the earth with all

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that on it creeps and flies, when he puts them on the same level. Millet discerns in nature an all-living element that can take manifold bodily forms and be expressed in a variety of ways, but is one and the same in all different forms. This grand pantheistic feature uplifts his pictures from *genre* to high, spiritual art. And since nature is never comic, so Millet's peasants—themselves a bit of nature—never affect us comically, but always pathetically, even when they are as sturdy, clumsy, and simple as David Teniers's boors. In one picture in the collection, "Maternal Foresight," Millet has apparently a humorous intention: a peasant woman is assisting her very small youngster at the doorstep of her house in a little necessity. Even here I cannot find anything to laugh at, unless from kindly sympathy for the hop-o'-my-thumb and his tender mother. It is just a glance at life, and at such no one who feels a reverence for the sanctity of life ever laughs.

The devotees of the great Pan—Corot, Rousseau, Daubigny, Millet, and their followers of the second rank, gain in significance side by side. Their contemporary, Delacroix, loses beside them. What I felt at the Century Exhibition of French art, I feel even more strongly in the Thiéry rooms at the Louvre. I am afraid Delacroix is one whose trial must be revised. Perhaps we shall then be obliged to confirm the unfavourable verdict that the

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adherents of the Classical movement passed on him at his appearance, although on quite different grounds.

Delacroix was not in love with life; he did not seek and find nature; he followed in her footsteps only in books. He was essentially an illustrator; apart from Victor Hugo he is not to be thought of. The Romantics performed a duty of gratitude when, with fanatical violence, they carried him triumphantly through his detractors. He is their henchman with the brush; he fights with them and for them. They only act according to the rules of chivalry when they protect him. His magic colouring is not to be contested, although it is often gaudy and theatrical. But out of his "Hamlet with the Gravediggers," his "Medea," his "Bride of Abydos," his "Abduction of Rebecca" ("Ivanhoe"), a dreary waste stares us in the face, which would be hardly bearable if we did not happen to know the poems from which Delacroix drew his subjects. We must put life into his dead pictures by what we remember of our reading. Delacroix stops at the externals. We have to add soul and passion.

After the men of 1830 came, on the one side, the neat painters of the Empire, of whom Meissonier is the best type; on the other, the naturalists with Courbet, the impressionists with Manet and Monet; and so the development went on to the confused struggles of this moment. That period of the July

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Revolution was felt by its contemporaries as an age of storm and stress in art. On us later-born children it has the effect of halcyon days, the full, rapturous life and sunny joys of which the present generation longs for in vain.

## VII

# THE TRIUMPH OF A REVOLUTION

### THE REALISTS

IN the last years of the Empire and the first of the Republic, great things occurred on the sacred hill of Montmartre, on the summit of which the Church of the Sacred Heart had not yet supplanted the Muses and Graces. A group of painters, diminishing in number, yet brave as lions, and pugnacious, arose in defence and attack against the official art of the *Académie*, the *École des Beaux Arts*, and the *Salon*, which was still an institution of the State. Their palette was a battle-shield, their brush a lethal weapon for cutting and thrusting, their easel a barricade. Uproar was what they painted, and plunder and carnage were the subjects of their conversation in endless beer and tobacco sessions. They wanted to massacre the old idols in oil-painting, and the tyrants of the plastic arts now become twaddlers. No more painting by tinker, plumber,

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or chimney-sweep! No soot in place of air! No Dutch dolls in tin armour, with volunteer firemen's brass helmets on their gingerbread heads! On the contrary, an honest rendering of phenomena of light and colour from actual observation, sincerity, open air, and impression.

The first to gather with fury and wild gesticulation around the daring preachers of the new gospel were literary men and journalists. They did not understand anything about painting, and would not have been capable of distinguishing a varnished oleograph for a cab-drivers' public house from a real Leonardo; whether a picture was blackened or saturated by sunlight, whether a human figure was clumsily conventional or felt and understood with truth to nature, that was to them quite as indifferent as the colour of the Empress of China's dressing-gown. They had, however, the feeling that this movement in art was, in some way or other, connected with thought of general subversion, and attacked the government. They thought they heard the naked women in Eduard Manet's "Down with Napoleon" shriek. The gleaming, noonday lights of Claude Monet seemed to them a cry for vengeance for the *coup d'état*. They understood Pissarro's landscapes as illustrating Victor Hugo's *Châtiments*, and Renoir's dancing *grisettes* clearly pronounced a crushing verdict on the Mexican Expedition. All the enemies of the Empire regarded open air as an item of their

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political programme. To be a true republican one must swear allegiance to realism. Thus Gambetta and Zola became fanatics of the new movement, not on æsthetic principles—such did not exist for either—but from a tendency to opposition.

We should be wrong to laugh at a Radical mob orator and an anarchist novelist being fervent advocates of a school of painting from party interests. It arises out of a quite correct feeling. “All is in all.” A close relationship unites all the phenomena of one time, and the most opposed forms may express a single fundamental mood. About 1868 realism meant quite as much a revolt against a bit of authority as republicanism did. Were not a luxuriant beard and a soft hat in 1848 proof positive of revolutionary sentiments? And about 1895 were not a tail-coat and a flowing neck-tie the acknowledgment of belief in blank verse and Maeterlinck?

From the first moment, then, realism had the honours of the opposition press and the support of those politicians, the majority of whom, later on, were to play the principal parts in the revolt of the Commune. The artists, to be sure, despised it at first, as long as it gained no *Salon* distinctions and had no market. For a long time—for some decades—it had none. The public regarded the works of the new movement only as expressions of unconscious or intentional artistic humour. It laughed

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at them as it did at the saucy caricatures in the comic papers. There was perhaps only one individual who, a generation ago, took the Manets and Monets, the Renoirs and Pissarros seriously, and was prepared to manifest his belief in them by ready money—the only genuine martyrdom in our days—and this seer, prophet, and confessor was Caillebotte. He bought their pictures; not at a big price, it is true, for we must not expect the superhuman from mere mortals, but he bought them; he poured out his red gold for them, and this sacrifice probably preserved the life of realism, or, at any rate, of its teachers.

Caillebotte himself painted, but only for himself, and that was praiseworthy; but what was more important, he had acquired a handsome fortune by commerce, and spent the major portion of his fine income on open-air pictures. He did not exhaust his enthusiasm by that. When he died, he bequeathed the most striking pieces—"the pearls," he called them—of his collection to the French State, on the condition that it left them together and accommodated them with a room in a Paris museum.

The Department of Fine Arts at first made difficulties; but finally, it resolved to accept the bequest. The Luxembourg Museum was enlarged by an additional building, and a small room in the new wing now accommodates the pictures left by

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Caillebotte, amongst which he also smuggled in two from his own brush. Thus the Revolutionaries attained the honours of a State museum. This triumph crowns an adventurous campaign which, after apparently fatal defeats at first, led from victory to victory, and from conquest to conquest. For a decade and a half the art of the Manets and Monets has dominated painting. Only in the works of a few obstinate old fogies is their spirit untraceable, at any rate on the Continent; for in England, to be sure, they have not succeeded in gaining the slightest influence on the Præ-Raphaelite movement. On the other hand, in countries without old and uninterrupted art traditions of their own, for which the history of painting begins at the moment in which they themselves first co-operate actively in it, therefore especially in North America and Scandinavia, there is, as a rule, no other art. When the painters in these countries awoke to art, that was the newest thing, *le dernier cri* of realism, and they took to this latest fashion, just as, in new colonies, negro ladies, who yesterday knew no other aid to their dusky loveliness than an apron of plaited grass and a few glass beads, insist that their toilet, or, at any rate, portions of it, shall be quite up to date.

But the victory in lands barbaric so far as art is concerned, and the apotheosis in the Luxembourg Museum, do not spell the end of the battle or the conclusion of peace. Realism had even recently

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to fight hard battles of persecution. Whilst the crowd pressed into the Caillebotte room, which was opened in 1897, and, it must be admitted, gave expression to very mixed feelings, certain masters of the Art School, the narrow Academician, Gérôme, at their head, sent to the Minister concerned a fiercely angry warning against the desecration of the Museum's hallowed rooms by the admission of rubbish which they characterised as "scandalous daubs," the "offspring of utter incompetency or lunacy."

The warning was wrongly timed. In 1897 it came too early, or too late. Too late, because Manet and Monet have apparently held their own against Gérôme and Gustave Moreau, and protests are futile against facts, or what are regarded as such at a given period. Too early, for people then still stood—and probably they stand now—at an insufficient distance from the movement now called impressionist to regard it from the perspective of history, and to assign it its proper place in the development of painting. That moment will come, most likely very soon. Then the protest of the Academicians will be superfluous, for even the æsthetic boors will repeat the verdict, then become a commonplace, that realism had its justification; that, besides transient harm, it was the author of permanent utility; and that, after a half-miraculous progress not uncommon in the history of art, the new men, who themselves

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could do little or nothing at all, taught more competent successors something precious.

The Caillebotte room will help to bring about a correct estimate of the revolutionists of "the 'sixties." Gérôme ought to have rejoiced at the opening of that room, for it really, for the first time, sets a legend in the light of history. For twenty years everybody has thought he had a right to chatter about realism, though few have really seen the documentary monuments of it, because up to now they were never conveniently accessible as a whole. The prototypical works of the Naturalist School were mostly shown cursorily in rare and little noticed exhibitions. Then they hung in their authors' studios, or in some private collections. He who had not lived in Paris for thirty years, and observed with close attention all the details of the art movement, or did not undertake troublesome journeys of exploration and discovery, could speak of them only from untrustworthy imitations, or from absolutely worthless hearsay. Now, at last, the material can be seen by all. Whoever is capable of receiving his own impressions can procure them.

Extravagant enthusiasm for the pioneers of the "Open Air" movement will now be quite as little excusable as its condemnation without mitigating circumstances. The former will, in face of the Caillebotte room, be recognised at the first glance as sheer weak-mindedness, the latter as lack of under-

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standing. That is the great service of this room in the Museum: it adduces all that can be said on behalf of realism, and shows at the same time, inexorably, its limitations.

I should like beforehand to exclude Raffaelli from the painters that appear in this collection. He is not a labourer from the first hour. Even later on, when he joined the movement, he was no orthodox believer. People, from their superficial knowledge, jumbled him up with the realists, because he was at first always, as the latter were often, a pessimistic confessor of the truth. His peculiar temperament decided his choice of sad subjects. In his outlook on life he was wont to dwell, with self-torturing choice, on depressing sights: on the sick in lazare-houses; on the homeless tramps in the moats about the Paris forts; on poor, human wrecks that float through the street-current of the great city. He told the story of these men with heart-breaking accuracy. He depicted them in mean, miserable, mud-tints; in the dust-grey of unswept, suburban streets; the sickly lime-white and dung-brown of neglected house-walls; the washed-out greenish-blue of worn-out cotton blouses. In this mood was painted his "Convalescents in the Hospital Yard," with its livid faces beneath the white skull-caps, and emaciated bodies in blue dressing-gowns, on the dank, moss-covered stone benches, in front of the sullen lazaretto. This picture, like all of

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Raffaelli's, makes up for the unpleasantness of its story by the severe honesty of its drawing; and in the street picture, "Behind Notre Dame," the astonishingly effective employment of the gay red kerchief of a workwoman in the foreground, amidst the subdued tones of a murky Paris day in uncertain weather, shows what a clever and faithful colourist this painter is, who so long painted obstinately from a degraded palette. Nowadays, he has, in the main, overcome his depression of spirits, and in his soul a bright sunshine laughs, the rays of which are discernible in all his later works.

The real originator of the new tendency was Eduard Manet. Of his three pictures in the Caillebotte room, one, the "Olympia," is a masterpiece. It had already long been the property of the Luxembourg collection, and amongst the academic works of that Museum it seemed so strange that it forced expressions of repugnance from most visitors. After this comes an insipid brown lady in a mantilla, and the important "Balcony." "Olympia" is a faded, decayed lady of the class which people in Paris are accustomed to describe as "the old guard." The person, whose hair is dressed for a *soirée*, but who is entirely without clothing, lies outstretched on a bed, displaying her charms, which might convert Don Juan himself to the monastic rule of chastity. By the couch stands a pretty negress, busied with her mistress. The "Balcony" shows two ladies with a

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gentleman friend, and a man-servant in the background. The two pictures display Manet's purpose and method. There is nothing of impressionism and open air to be remarked in the "Olympia." The scene is a closed room filled with diffused rays of chamber-light. The figures of the two women are accurately painted, indeed in a painfully and curiously dry style. In vain would one look for the smartness and bold dashing on of colour that are now held to be the characteristics of impressionism. It is all painfully and laboriously measured, without swing or freedom, without mastery over the model or the tone. The picture is revolutionary only in its straightforwardness. When it appeared, the academic masters painted prettily. When they had to represent nudity, they painted a sort of conventional rose-coloured jelly, without bones or physiognomy, smooth, ordinary, and superficially pleasing as a china doll, inartistic, and unspeakably tedious. In his "Olympia," Manet rebelled against this prettiness in painting that so falsifies nature. He chose the most repulsive model he could find, and reproduced it with literal exactness in all its repulsive truth. He showed that there is female flesh not altogether too old that is not composed of snow and rose leaves. He taught his truth brutally and unwisely, with churlish violation of good taste and gallantry, but with ardour and conviction. The "Balcony" already announces the joyous tidings of open air.

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The two women are bathed in full daylight, which cruelly misuses their faces. Here, too, Manet wears the blinkers that narrow his artistic horizon. He wishes to oppose sunny brightness to the brown broth which was given out in the masters' studios as the only colour whereby one could find salvation. He therefore lavishes his light, which overcomes and disperses the darkness ; but he forgets that sunshine influences local colours ; that it gives them various effects, according to their illuminative power ; that it envelops and blends them, however opposite they may be, in one single underlying harmony of silver or gold tone, and with no more misgiving than a saucy child, he lays on the canvas the true colours of things unaltered and unbalanced. I do not doubt that the grey-green of the window-shutters and the arsenical green of the obliquely crossed iron bars of the balcony are painted with the very trade colours which the house-painters actually use for these objects. Of course, this truth in detail produces the greatest artistic untruth in the whole, and the picture that was to be the Whitsun sermon of holy "Open Air," becomes, through Manet's inadequacy, a speech for the prosecution of the sun.

Claude Monet, the classic of impressionism, is not to be reproached with any incapacity. His execution never betrays him. He says what he wants to say to the last dot on the "i," and if what he has said fails to satisfy, it is not because he lacked words, but solely

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because he had no more to say. Monet is a tippler, a drunkard so far as light is concerned. He cannot pass by any lively brilliant illumination without turning in for a painting-bout. Form, however, is to him a matter of indifference; it has no physiognomy for him, nor does it arouse in him any association of ideas. He neglects it absolutely. He does not draw or compose. In his pictures everything is without form, as in nature herself, unless we regard her with pre-existing thoughts of arrangement and meaning—in short, under the optical and logical categories. But he has not his peer in arresting the fugitive magic of sportive rays, their motes, their refractions on surfaces of every kind, on fixed bodies, liquids, and gases. His "Railway Station," with its wide opening towards the railway line, the bluish clouds of smoke and steam from the puffing locomotive transfused with light, the shimmering vapour under the framework of the iron roof, is unsurpassable as a rendering of absolutely meaningless effects of light. Pictures of this sort will become expressive only when the photography of natural colours is so perfected as to admit of instantaneous copies. Equally remarkable as painting, and more valuable as higher art, is his "Interior of a Room," with a shadowy boy and plants in the foreground, and a shining floor flooded with blue from daylight pouring in like a cataract through the window in the background. More valuable

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artistically, because this interior of great elegance, this outline of a child, and this blue, fairy-tale tone of the flood of light, are capable of awakening mood, *i.e.*, will have an effect not only on the senses but also on the soul; will stimulate not only the optic centres of perception, but also the higher centres of conception and judgment. "Breakfast in the Open Air," and two landscapes and marine pieces, are painted after the same rule as the two panels I have described.

Gueuneutte's "Morning Porridge" draws its inspiration from Raffaelli, Degas's "Dancers and their Mothers" from Manet. I put Degas, however, above Manet, for he draws more lightly and smoothly than the latter, and when he has to depose to ugly reality under the witness's oath of his naturalistic conscience, he does it, not in an angry and provoking way like Manet, but with the divine gift of humour.

Monet's joy in light becomes with P. M. Renoir an affectation. He has not the simple love of truth of his comrade. He falls into exaggeration which betrays conscious purpose and straining after originality. His two "Young Girls" at a piano of the colour of cranberry syrup; his nude figure of a woman, on whose skin lights and shadows play so unfortunately that she looks as if beaten black and blue, in places even as if studded with the corpse-stains of putrescence in the second degree; the

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"Girl in the Swing," and particularly the "Ball at the Moulin de la Galette," seek rather to disconcert than to convince us by their unwonted tones. These pictures have historical importance as ancestors. From their jests of colour are descended the jokes of Besnard, from their rain of sunlight through shadowing foliage comes the piebaldness of a Zorn and particularly of a Max Lieberman, who make an eruption of yellow and reddish spots fall on their bodies. Renoir's "Girl Reading" finally is a simple aberration. He who tolerates such stumps of hands in a picture that is not meant for a mere sketch is either without capacity or without conscience—the one as bad as the other.

Pissarro is the triumph of seeing without thought. He seizes all the marvels of transformation which the light of various periods of the year and hours of the day accomplishes on objects over which it skims, with the same certainty as Monet, but he imagines even less over it than does the latter. With him the impressions which he feels from the outer world do not generally pierce beyond the back of his eyes. He is a remarkable instance of the sharpest sight with the retina in conjunction with absolute soul-blindness.

The panegyrists of impressionism assert that it was not well represented in the Caillebotte collection. That is a pretext of perplexed swaggerers who can now be nailed fast, and who should in

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shame and confusion crowd here, where it is easy to test their wild exaggerations. Impressionism has never produced confessed more characteristic works than those gathered in the Caillebotte room. It has never been more straightforward than in Manet's "Olympia" and Degas's "Theatre Mothers," never more bright than in Monet's "Breakfast in the Open Air" and Pissarro's landscape, never was it in a higher degree lightening-sight and instantaneous painting than in Monet's "Railway Station." Every verdict on impressionism based on this room is an adequately grounded verdict, against which the attempted higher appeal to I know not what unknown works must be rejected.

The painters who entered on the new movement are interesting as men, because they aimed at much, and at what was comparatively great. They are, from an artistic standpoint, uninteresting, because they achieved little. It is the old tragedy of the will, to which the strength plays traitor; of the mind, which subjectively and *in posse* brings about the highest, but objectively produces nothing, because it fails in realisation. The Manets and Monets, the Renoirs and Pissarros, wanted to create a new art by returning to the old truth. It gives them a right to reckon themselves as belonging to the family of the illustrious heroes of the Renaissance, who emancipated themselves from the traditions of the Byzantine School, as the

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former did from the sham-classic rule of a Couture, a Cabanel, or a Baudry. The man affected by a Cimabue and a Giotto will not be unmoved in the presence of Manet and Monet, especially of Monet, for he performed a creative act. He said: "Let there be light," and "there was light" in painting. The miracle of Genesis is still being wrought to-day, and only in Gustave Moreau and the Præ-Raphaelites has the Logos proved itself powerless.

After paying them this tribute of recognition we will also take leave of them. They have pointed out paths, but they have not walked in them. In place of intricate Chinese signs, they have invented a free, brilliantly progressive alphabet, but in this script they had nothing to say. Their art is merely optical—neither emotional nor ideal. They were commonplace—nay, to some extent—unbeautiful souls. That is why, despite their honest passion for truth, and despite their precious medium of sunshine, they have not been able to produce genuine art-work.

They have meanwhile not lived in vain. Their influence has been fruitful. At first it indeed generally did harm. All bunglers flew to imitating them, and the impudent rabble of both worlds alleged they understood their teaching thus: "Drawing is superstition, and the more repulsive a hide looks, so much more beautiful and especially more modern it is." But after this scum of the artistic rabble those who had a vocation came over to the

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new movement, and showed what it could achieve in consecrated hands. With the open air Roll became the master he is ; impressionism brought a Brangwyn to maturity ; truth—the beautiful truth, not the repulsive, vulgar truth—found its triumphs in a Whistler and a Sargent. The weaknesses and mistakes of the forerunners have furnished despicable parasites with the transitory reputation, among the weak-minded, for genius, which will quickly disappear before the recognition of their wretchedness. Their lofty views, and, to some extent, the means of expression suggested by them, have, however, equipped men of illustrious talent, who permanently enrich mankind's property in works of beauty.

### ALFRED SISLEY

Alfred Sisley was one of the most renowned amongst that group of realists to which I alluded in my foregoing appreciation of the Caillebotte room in the Luxembourg Museum. He, too, like his companions—Manet and Monet, Pissarro and Renouard—was a rebel against traditions, and a preacher of new gospels. He also denied old idols with fine disdain, and preached doctrines that seemed to him to embrace in themselves the whole truth.

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He managed, indeed, to collect a few convinced disciples, but, on the other hand, hardly any congregation about his altar or pulpit; and this was due simply to the sobriety and uncongeniality of his dogmas, which failed to satisfy the cravings for æsthetic devotion of the faithful.

Sisley was a landscape painter. He was purely this, to the exclusion of every admixture. He never introduced a human figure, and, so far as I remember, only one of an animal, into his paintings. The only life that moved and stirred in them was that of atmosphere: the play of lights, of their refractions, of their coloured dust, of their vanishing in shadows and darkness of various depths. Even the vegetable world, though one of the most important elements in academical landscape painting, he treated slightly. He had no respect for the attractive individuality of a tree. It interested him at most as an object in his field of view, which catches and diverts the beams of the sun in a particular way. He saw nothing of the marvels of colour and form of the minute life, that is displayed in a piece of turf, a bush, or underwood, and reveals to the thoughtful and experienced eye the whole nature-tragedy of the struggle for existence: the despairing striving in the various plants for air and light, or moisture and shade; the victorious domination of one or several species; the meek supplication for mercy of single scattered flowers or plants; the defeat and

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flight of families unable to maintain their position against superior antagonists ; the intrusion of bold strangers demanding for themselves a place among the old settlers ; the confederacies of friendly groups that reside together and trust each other ; the single combats of enemies seeking to throttle and uproot one another. He who has never gazed deeply into nature perhaps regards all these pictures of combat and triumph as mere phrases, corresponding to nothing real. The biologist of plants knows better, to be sure, and many a landscape painter too ; so did the first English Præ-Raphaelites especially. However unbearable their vagaries and perversions may be—on these I will not enter now—this one thing must be said in their praise : they understand and love plant-life. For them every grass and herb, to say nothing of those lords, the trees, has a physiognomy, a personal mystery, which they know how to unriddle, and reveal, or, at any rate, indicate. Of all this Sisley knows nothing. For him a grassy mead is a plain of colours with gradations, starred with varied patches ; always a mere study of light and nothing else ; never an expression of events of life.

Here lies the limitation of his capacity. In my book, "Paradoxes," I have tried to classify painters according to the rank of that segment of the central nerve-system, in which their talent is rooted. By this method I arrived at a distinction between painters

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who feel joy only in colours and their harmonies, and others who, besides delighting in colour, often even without this, have a developed sense of the proportion of things in space, therefore, of forms, reciprocal distances, movements so far as these latter can be indicated by means of the painter's fixed process: those, in short, who know how to elicit from visible phenomena an invisible, emotional significance, and to represent them so that they express, in a natural way, psychical processes and feelings, without becoming falsified through the intentional introduction of arbitrary features foreign to them. Now, Sisley is an instructive instance of those painters who are painters only through their retina and lowest centres of perception, viz., their feeling for colour, and the vivid sensation of enjoyment it affords them.

Sisley has the most delicate sense for the lightest gradations and depths of colour. If I may use an image from an adjacent intellectual domain, he does optically what an ear would do acoustically which was capable of feeling purely all the tones of a chromatic divided, perhaps, into sixty-fourths. This faculty gives him his rank as an artist, but it was also the torturing demon of his life; for he wanted to reproduce with equal clearness what he saw so distinctly. That is, however, impossible by the medium of oil-painting. Let it never be forgotten that the colours an artist uses are very

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different from the natural appearances which they wish to recall. All painting is a translation that falls short of the original text, and even the most refined palette only permits a vulgar groping after the subtle play of colour in the reality. It is sheer convention, to which our eyes are artificially trained, that we recognise in definite play of colours, human flesh, an evening sky, foliage, or mirroring water. In all cases we have, at most, approximations before us, and even a man's countenance by Franz Hals reproduces the true coloration of the skin on a human face, as little as perhaps the well-known *scherzo* in the second movement of the Pastoral reproduces the true note of the golden oriole. Sisley, overlooked, like the majority indeed of impressionists, and like many very juvenile stipplers and black and white artists, this technical main condition—if you like, this main defect—of all painting with media as at present known; and he obstinately insisted on overcoming a difficulty that is, as a matter of fact, insuperable. The whole labour of his life is a struggle with the resistance of matter, intensely pathetic, but, nevertheless, finally only irritating, because its utter hopelessness is admitted. He tries to square the circle, which, as may be proved to him, is not feasible, and he aimlessly dissipates his energies in this futile effort. He is bent on arresting the most fugitive vanishing, the gentlest swaying of a ray of light, and, as it were, the fourth decimal

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place of a fraction of colour, and on fixing it on the canvas. And as he cannot conjure forth this feat from his colour-tubes, in spite of the most learned and complicated mixing, he tries to reach his goal by newly invented tricks of the brush. Thus he gets to dotting and spotting. Innumerable minute touches with the brush are to leave behind a chaos of colour-dots, from which the eye may come to discern, or, at any rate, get an inkling of, the play of colour in the actual object. This method is extremely laborious and risky. It postulates great patience and ability to emphasise in the minute work the firm lines of the drawing. For if one loses sight of these lines, or cannot make them ring out clearly from the colour gamut disseminated equally over the whole canvas, the picture dissolves into a shapeless daub. Sisley himself is often wrecked on this rock. By his method, however, in a few happy moments, he obtains, to be sure, effects which would scarcely be deemed possible. Then we may enjoy in his pictures a real dance of sun-motes in transfulgent air.

A single picture of Sisley's even the connoisseur easily passes by. It is insignificant. Even a whole row of pictures which represent different themes will hardly make a great impression. At most, certain delicacies of tone, a certain far-sighted clearness of atmosphere, make an impression. If, on the other hand, you see near one another panels which depict

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the same subjects at different hours of the day or seasons of the year, under different lights and conditions of weather, you grasp in astonishment the meaning of this artist. The subject is the same, but so altered as to be hardly recognisable. People marvel at the power with which Sisley can arrest strangely changing aspects, and gain some faint idea of the difficulty which the exposition of observations calls for, observations which are generally out of reach of any but the most acute feeling and the most painful attention. Sisley has openly admitted that his skill is unintelligible without the key afforded by comparison. That was why he exhibited, as a rule, at least two—usually many more—treatments of the same subject. Thus in the *Salon* in the Champs de Mars in 1898, he showed a beach, “Lady’s Cove,” in two lights; and, in 1896, Moret Church, in transparent pale lilac just before sunset, and also in softly-veiled slate-grey in rainy weather. I remember a row of studies of the same village church, which ran through all the divisions of the spectrum, one after another, and, on each succeeding panel, was a revelation the more dazzling in proportion as one already knew its form in all its details. Sisley has hardly ever had his equal in transposing a piece into different keys.

Admiration for the almost morbidly exaggerated sensitiveness to the slightest differences in tones of colour, and sympathetic feeling for the artist’s

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despair at the inadequacy of a technique, gross, after all, as the medium of the most delicate intentions — these are the impressions which one feels at even the most friendly consideration of Sisley's most successful works. Dreaming and longing, reminiscence and presentiment, on the other hand, they never inspire, for they are absolutely lacking in all psychic, emotional, and imaginative sense.

From the example of Sisley, we recognise the accuracy of the maxim which, when put nakedly, sounds almost provokingly paradoxical, and yet is literally correct, viz., that landscape painting, or, at any rate, a certain kind of landscape painting, is the most literary of all species of plastic art, the one from which the least is received, and into which the most is put. Landscape painting seems to reproduce nature herself, and therefore necessarily to be as objective as a land surveyor's plan, or even as a photograph. It is, as a matter of fact, incomparably more subjective than portrait, historical, or *genre* painting, for there is throughout, not nature over again, but the features of nature which have excited the attention of the painter, and aroused in him a mood. It therefore discloses to us, more than any other kind of painting, the soul of the painter, the peculiarity of his mode of feeling, the bent of his dreams, and the object of his longing. If every work of art is a confession on the part of the artist, landscape painting is a particularly complete

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and honest acknowledgment. It is a portrait of the artist, which he himself has painted, transcribing all the wrinkles of his soul.

Nature in herself is absolutely expressionless. The feeling of the person who contemplates her first adds expression, just as his senses translate the movements of the atmosphere and matter, which are, in themselves, devoid of colour and sound to the perceptible values of colours and tones. The contemplation of nature awakens in us associations of ideas, and these we project into nature. Therefore we find, again, in this latter the whole range of emotion and thought of our consciousness, and nature, therefore, influences every one who contemplates her correspondingly to his education and mental habits.

Landscape painting is, then, also a continuous illustration of the literature of its time. It is anti-classical in the Renaissance and Late Renaissance up to Poussin; Ossianic and Rousseau-esque in the eighteenth century, and, in Corot, is Lamartinish. It would, of course, be going too far to point out here what the relations are between each individual great landscape painter and the writings of his contemporaries; and how certain notable exceptions from the rule of parallelism between landscape painting and the fashion of the day in literature—Salvator Rosa, Ruysdael, and Turner (just to mention only three)—are to be explained. It is, meanwhile, not

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to be disputed that the landscape painter approaches nature with a soul filled with the literary spirit of his time, and puts into her what he has retained from his reading. A painting, then, awakens also in the mind of the spectator an echo of all the poetic melodies that have enthralled him, and it is the soft echo of these thousands of poetic voices in our soul, to which we listen when we enjoy a landscape painting.

We listen, however, in vain before a picture of Sisley's; all is still in our soul. This is because the painter has regarded nature from a wholly unliterary standpoint. She awakens in him no associations of ideas, therefore his pictures awaken none in us. He has seen the play of colour, found his delight in it, and has taken no further thought, but has merely striven to reproduce it accurately. We follow his efforts with curiosity, and approve the results if they are successful. But in this appraisement, humour and imaginative power have no part.

Is such landscape painting art, or a clever trick? The question is worth careful consideration.

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### CAMILLE PISSARRO

One of the most interesting artists in our times was this Pissarro, born at St Thomas in the Danish Antilles, though of a Dutch Jewish family of Spanish extraction settled in Curaçoa, who died in Paris in 1903 at the age of seventy-three. He was a born painter, of the class whose sense of form hardly exceeds the average, whose remarkably fine perception of colour, however, reacting very strongly on every optical irritation, makes the excitement of the retina the source for them of profound feelings of pleasure or the contrary, and fixes their idea and thought, to a certain extent polarises it according to colour.

It is sufficient to say few words as to his outer life. Impelled by his bent for painting, he came to Paris at the age of twenty, and had the good fortune to be taken as a pupil by old Corot. He saw Th. Rousseau and Millet working with his master, and he lived during the most susceptible years of youth amongst such originals, in the most glorious Barbizon period. His natural tendency directed him imperiously to landscape painting. This, then, is the substance of his whole life as an artist. Incited by Millet's example, in his young days he put peasants in his fields and meadows, but they were always mere accessories in the landscape, and arrested the eye less than the ground

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and plants. He had then also sufficient knowledge of himself to abandon, at an early stage, human figures, for he realised that there was more life in the tiniest sod of his turf than in his conscientious but insignificant villagers. In the high school, in which it was his privilege to learn, he acquired that certainty and force which distinguished him up to his old age. When, however, he had mastered Corot's brilliant technique and Rousseau's draughtsmanship and composition, he ceased to be an imitative disciple, and with full deliberation, went his own ways, which for a time lay far from Corot's goal, but at last, by a wonderfully circuitous route, brought him back to it once more. Not long did he try modestly and laudably, with a good young man's carefully moderated works, in the *Salon* for certificates of industry and good marks from the academical masters. At once he joined the hot-headed set; he exhibited, from 1864 onwards, only in the "Salon of the Rejected" and with the "Independents," and became one of the most prominent men in the group of impressionists.

Nothing is funnier than to read the explanation of the terms "Impressionists" and "Impressionism" of certain art-gossips among the critics in Germany. These transcendental phrasegrinders, who have no notion how the word arose, believe it was invented by painters or æsthetes with the set purpose of characterising an artistic tendency, and of indicating elliptically a method of execution; and, with the

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rapturous, prophet-mien common among this brotherhood, they treat us to the deepest and most breath-ravishing explanations of the word. The truth is that the expression owes its origin to the jest of a comic paper that intended nothing special by it, least of all an æsthetic theory. In 1874 the painters who for ten years had been known as the "Open Air" artists or "Realists" exhibited a number of their works in the reception-room of the writer and photographer, Nadar. Claude Monet appeared, amongst others, with a sunset, which was quite in the manner of Turner's last years, and he entitled it "Impression." It was a remarkable and characteristic work, without form, consisting only of streaks of red and orange, in the highest degree offensive to those who will not have the contemplation of nature restricted to the observation of colours, but look also for outline and modelling. A wanton scoffer, making merry in the "Charivari" over this exhibition, seized on Monet's "Impression" as the pattern of the new style, sneered at it in the tone of a genuine back-biter, and, with the object of belittling them, called Monet's fellow-combatants "Impressionists," by which he meant only that, according to his view, their pictures were daubs, just like Claude Monet's "Impression." That is the simple origin of the word into which the German commentators have read something exceedingly mysterious and wonderful.

Pissarro belonged to Monet's circle of friends, and

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fell under the designation, which rapidly became current, of "Impressionist." In his case, it only means that he sought and found in nature only effects of light, only the play of sunbeams on things and around things.

In the three or four centuries, that landscape painting has been raised to the rank of a branch of art—I leave out of consideration, in this place, the ancient landscape, because the modern development is unconnected with it—an enquiry, which enters into the motives and aims of painters, can distinguish three different kinds of landscape, which I would term respectively the literary, the lyric, and the optical. I do not choose these new designations for old and well-known things arbitrarily, but because, in my opinion, they mark what is essential better than do the prescriptive ones.

Literary landscape, on which I have already briefly expressed my views in treating of Sisley, is that which traditionally goes under the names of historical, heroic, ideal, or artificial landscape. It is not prompted by delight in nature, but is either the offspring of imaginative power or a piece of intellectual know-all work, in both cases, the result of reading. It is, to put it briefly, a continuous illustration of the literature in vogue. Since the Renaissance, ancient heroic materials have been specially favoured in poetry. The Spanish theatre, Corneille, and Racine lived on them. Even if they placed the lofty exploits of their heroes in a less

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remote past and on another stage than the ancient world, still, they endowed them with hundreds of reminiscences of the Græco-Roman mythology and history. Poussin, and even Claude Lorrain, conceived their landscapes as the frames of heroic romances and dramas. They were designed as stage decoration, which the spectator might people from his memory with figures in Roman mail-armour or Gothic plate-armour, familiar to him from contemporary poetry. In order to facilitate this play of fancy, ancient temples or ruins, perhaps even men in classical garb, helpfully stimulate the association of ideas. J. J. Rousseau substituted the sentimental for the heroic fashion; but the return to nature, which he and his innumerable imitators preached, did not to landscape painters at all mean the sinking into the contemplation of God's actual world, but only the substitution for the heroes and knights, the upright or fallen marble pillars of their predecessors, of shepherds and shepherdesses, rustic cottages and herdsmen's fires. Thus landscape painting illustrated in turn *Orlando Furioso*, *Jerusalem Delivered*, the *Æneid*, the tragedies of Corneille and Racine, Rousseau, Gessner, and Ossian; then, nearer to our time, Victor Hugo and the Romantics, Zola and the Naturalists, down to the latest symbolists and mystics, whose contemplation, so far as one can speak of such a thing in their gassy heads, greets us from the pictures of Burne-Jones and his continental imitators, and also from the landscape compositions

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of Puvis de Chavannes and Henri Martin. It may be safely affirmed that, of the pictures of literary landscape, not a single one would have been painted unless a book or some species of literature had, to some extent, commissioned them with an exact specification of all details.

Lyrical landscape is that which is perhaps also designated landscape of mood. It is more consistent with nature than literary landscape. It owes much less to reminiscence of books or plays ; its only relation to literature is that through this the painter is schooled to be more susceptible of certain features of nature. Landscape pictures of this species could be painted under some circumstances by artists who had never read a book or heard a poem, if only their own disposition were attuned to poetry. For this painting the landscape itself is a poem—ballad, romance, or idyll, in many cases, perhaps, even a melodrama. It tells some tale, or hints at one, the more delicately so much the more expressively. The wrinkles of the ground, the irregularity and abruptness of the lines of mountains, the gloom of the woods, awaken presentiments ; our yearning follows the paths which are lost in the blue distance, or behind hills and bends ; coolness rises from the foaming rivulet ; mystery broods over the motionless fish-pond. Everything unspoken, or partly unspeakable, which a keenly perceptive man of deep contemplation imports into nature, moves and reigns in and over the lyric landscape painting. It expresses a complex,

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subjective mood, embracing in itself many elements of sense, feeling, and thought—the joy of spring, the melancholy of autumn, the cheerlessness of winter, the shudder at the weird, the dread of eternity. It is viewed anthropomorphically. It owes its strongest effects to traits which do not exist in nature herself, but are added to her by human imagination. Japanese art knows only lyric landscape. In Europe it was first developed by the great Dutchmen, Ruysdael and Van Ostade, to attain in Corot its zenith unsurpassed up to the present time. As it lays expression into its forms, it must figure the latter distinctly. It draws and composes, therefore, with deliberation. It proceeds from the realistically rendered topographical anecdote, even if it achieves this by the transcendental.

Optical landscape, finally, is that which seeks to reproduce only the play of convergent or divergent, of reflected or broken light in nature. It is neither book-illustration nor views of places. It does not invite to the enjoyment of nature in the sense of the Sunday excursionist from big towns, or the summer tripper. It offers no scene with suggestion that we should live out our subjective moods there. The outlines, the plastic of the bodies, are a matter of indifference to it. Everything is merely a patch of colour to it; only an arena of dancing sunbeams. It wants to reproduce, as truly and fully as possible, the change and merging of lights and shades, the reciprocal influence of neighbouring and

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overlapping colours, the *crescendo* of hues in the foreground and their fading away in the perspective. It systematically rates the intellectual and moral relations as foreign to its art. It is not enthusiastic for a particular season of the year or a certain architecture of cliffs and mountains. It knows nothing of the secret magic of water, heath, forest, or snow-plain. It gives light in scales, and in harmonised and dissonant chords, and will give nothing else. This landscape painting is an art of purely sensual preception, which may call pre-existent feelings and thoughts over the threshold of consciousness, but brings about no feelings and thoughts of itself. It is to be compared with the effect of the Æolian harp, which stimulates our hearing with melodious sound, but says nothing thematically differentiated to it. Debussy, latterly, consciously strives back to these origins of acoustic pleasure. The disciples of Turner in England and on the Continent enter in landscape on the same way back to a style of painting which, neglecting form, lays stress on the harmonies of light and colour.

In practice, besides the three sharply outlined species of landscape painting, manifold transitions and mixed forms are, of course, also observable. If, perhaps, G. Poussin represents literary, Corot lyric, Turner, at the time the formation of his cataract began, optical landscape, in its theoretical purity, we see in Claude Lorrain a revelling in light and a poetic mood penetrate the mytho-heroic

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literary painting which he owes to his artistic training, and from which, in spite of higher flights, he could never entirely free himself; and Segantini is a good example of an originally lyrical landscape that is always more strongly inclining to the optical; for if at the beginning he loved to copy high mountains, at last he busied himself only with fixing the wonder of light in thin air on the mirroring ice and glacier snow.

Camille Pissarro was mainly, in separate periods of his artistic development exclusively, an optical landscape painter. The attunement with nature which is afforded by the meeting of mountain and wood, water and reed, by the forms of trees and cliffs, the peculiarities of plant-life, and the movements of open country, he evidently did not feel and he cannot arouse. He was nothing, and he wanted to be nothing, but a priest and poet of light. When light fell, what objects it illumined and played on was a matter of such indifference to him that this landscape painter painted city scenes just as often as those of open country. Views of the Paris Boulevards, the Avenue de l'Opéra, the Seine seen from the bridges, the streets and squares of Rouen, occupy quite as large a space in his work as studies of the valley of the Marne and the hills of Southern England. Thanks to the good school from which he came, he never, like so many of his rivals, melts away into formlessness. He could not refrain from drawing

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distinctly. It was the movement of his bold and skilful hand that pervaded his will; but the sole hero of his pictures, to whom he gave his love and attention, was light.

After he had outgrown the formulae of the Corot type of landscape, he sought with persistent, hot endeavour to find a method that would qualify him to draw into his picture as much light as possible, as intense light as possible, even the whole sun. What he himself found failed to satisfy him. When Seurat, who suffered undoubtedly from eye troubles, came forward with his stippling, Pissarro at once took possession of the new manner, and became a stippler even unconsciously. Seurat, it is well known, taught that the painter, if he would give truth and force to colour, must not mix the shade on his palette and transfer it ready-made to the canvas, but must dissect it into its primary colours, which are known from the spectrum, and insert them in little dabs by one another, so as to leave it to the eye to put them together again on the retina. This optical proceeding professes to have been learnt by listening to nature, which also offers us only as single colours what we feel as a synthesis of colour. The theory is sheer nonsense. Nothing of the sort happens in nature. When we see green grass we do not see yellow and blue grass which our eye mixes into green, but we see a body proceed from the aether-vibrations of the undulations, which call forth on the retina a

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sensation of green; and to imitate this influence of the grass we have to employ only one colour stuff from which atmospheric vibrations of similar undulations proceed. Unscientific painters were, however, impressed by the sham-scientific jabber of Seurat, who tried, in his wonted manner, through a subsequently discovered theory, to convert a defect of sight into an advantage; and they applied themselves the more zealously to stippling as the innumerable specks really made bright a twinkling, whirling impression, which superficially reminded one of the vibration of hot air on a sunny plain at midsummer noon.

*Only superficially.* Pissarro soon discovered that stippling really did not bring more light into his pictures, and he gave it up. He resigned the Seurat method to rivals who rush after eccentricity because they hope to astonish by it, and to whom a style of painting was particularly suitable, which blurred the line with colour and saved them that tedious drawing that always gave them the greatest affliction. He himself, however, returned again to the honest style of wielding the brush, which he had learnt of his great masters.

The stippling episode of his life, which he got over, throws light, however, on the painful, fundamental mistake of Pissarro and his companions. They wanted to paint light, and by that wanted something impossible, for light is not to be represented

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by colours which do not themselves emit light, and are neither phosphorescent nor fluorescent. All that is attainable by colour is awakening the reminiscence of light, and, by means of the memory-picture illuminating the brain, to cheat our consciousness with the idea of a directly received impression. The very great masters of optical landscape painting soon acknowledge, or feel, that the brush can indeed conjure forth the illusion of illumination, but is unable to paint light, and they turn from a hopeless Sisyphus-task to create pictures of mist and dusk, from which sunlight—a thing inimitable—is absolutely banished. The most instructive example of this is James Whistler; but he who does not possess the instinctive certainty of genius will not be conscious of the limitations of human capacity, and ever rolls the round stone unweariedly up the mountain.

Pissarro would have saved himself many hours of tragic quest, struggle, and sense of powerlessness, had he known or recognised the primary fact which Friedrich Hebbel seized in his theological but lucid epigram :

“He who the sun has created will ever remain quite another  
Than the industrious wight who for us prospects shall paint.”

## Triumph of Revolution—Whistler's Psychology

### WHISTLER'S PSYCHOLOGY

"Do you think, prince, that Raphael would not have been the greatest genius among painters if he had been unlucky enough to be born without hands?" Lessing makes the painter Conti say to Prince Gonzaga. A century and a half ago that seemed paradoxical, and was, probably on that account, one of the most quoted maxims of Lessing's. It has, meanwhile, experienced the fate of many paradoxes, viz., become a commonplace. Nowadays, every dabbler in psychology knows that not arm and hand—*i.e.*, execution—make the painter, but his optical brain centres, *i.e.*, his sensitiveness to impressions of sight, his specific reactions on colour and form. One is a born painter—a painter from organic necessity and natural bent preceding all education—only by special development or susceptibility of this centre.

In painting, however, there are two elements to be kept distinct—drawing and colour. Both these are traceable to the centres of sight, but they correspond to different sensibilities. Optical centres, which perceive with particular keenness and delicacy the distinctions between intensities of light, are the real, organic hypothesis of the talent for drawing; for what we perceive with the eye, without the aid

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of the senses of touch and muscle, as outline or form, is purely distinction of intensity in light. Optical centres, on the other hand, which are particularly sensitive to the variations of undulations of light, form the basis of the sense of colour and the talent for colouring. As a rule the talents for drawing and colouring appear coupled, even if one or the other preponderates, for highly developed or particularly sensitive optical centres are naturally receptive beyond the average of optical impression of every sort, of differences both of intensity and of undulations of light. This is, however, not always the case, and there are dry, sharp draughtsmen without sense of colour, and some who revel in colour without the ability to grasp the idea of form and render it plastically.

In a brain that is characterised by a special morphological or functional development or sensitiveness of the optical centres, this dominates all functions of the brain, especially memory and association of ideas. The entire thinking faculty has an optical or visual character; it stands in a dependent relation to sight. Memory clings almost exclusively to reminiscent pictures of the sense of sight, and association of ideas connects mainly pictures of this category. Every perception of form calls up in the consciousness representations of form. The fancy is "inwardly completely full of figures," as Albert Dürer quaintly and with wonderful intuition

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expresses it in his "Diaries." The world-picture of this brain, always disposed to intense observation, is neither loud nor excited, but bright, flashing, and radiant like a mosaic work of precious stones and enamel. All the inner connections between the different domains of the brain are sharpened towards the optic centres, and all the activities of the brain, all emotions, all processes on the threshold of consciousness also release central optical excitements.

Whistler's life-work reveals more than that of any other artist in our times the deep, organic primitiveness of his genius as a painter. We can observe in him, as in a school text, the psychology of the born painter. His signature is at once a fine example of the association of ideas on the part of a visionary. It consists, as everybody knows who has seen Whistler's works, of a butterfly with evenly outstretched wings. People have insisted on seeing heaven knows what symbol in this, and have consequently sought the wildest and remotest explanations of it. If any one asked the master for an explanation, he laughed, and made a mysterious gesture of refusal. It gave him vast entertainment to see his admirers tormenting themselves with profound attempts at interpreting it. They just had no eyes; they could not see. The butterfly is nothing but the first letter of Whistler's name—a big W. A Gothic, ornamental W with

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the two side lines bellied out and a bar in the middle reminds one strikingly of a soaring butterfly with its cylindrical body between its outstretched wings. The definite association of ideas from similarity of form made Whistler, as he painted the W of his signature, think of a butterfly, and he henceforward formed this picture that was fuller in expression, disregarding the original letter, which seemed to him balder and more meaningless. The butterfly came to the front more and more as the W went further and further back, and it is possible that at last Whistler himself forgot the point from which he started.

Whistler was, when he liked, in the front rank as a designer of forms. From the severe, painfully upright school of Gleyre he went forth a master of drawing, as of the outline of corporeality of three dimensions seen stereoscopically. One glance at his wonderfully plastic portraits, especially of his first period, teaches this irrefutably ; but, on the whole, as his individuality made itself felt, he neglected form and became more engrossed in colour. In the second half of his life the outlines of subjects hardly any longer interested him at all ; he only dwelt on their appearances in colour, on the harmony or discord of their tones. That means that his optical centres were much more sensitive to the differences of undulations than to those of the intensity of light. From this there necessarily resulted a contra-

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diction between him and the average individuals which was not to be got over, since it originated in differences in the constitution of the brain. He who has not Whistler's special hyper-sensitiveness to colour is simply unable to see things as the latter saw them. He can just as little imagine the impressions that Whistler feels through his sense of sight as perhaps those which are supplied to a hound by his nose. When the blissfully but painfully supersensitive appreciator of colour and the dull seer of outline, *i.e.*, the perceiver of light, sought to explain themselves to each other, inexplicable misunderstandings were bound to arise, which make his celebrated law-suit with Ruskin an excruciatingly comic jest. Ruskin appreciated only draughtsmanship, his mind never went beyond contour. For him a picture was a writing that should express thoughts and feelings in the most concrete form. He demanded that it should be a definite communication, reducible to plain words, as of a narrative, a record of travel, or a treatise on natural science. A picture that differed from an exact representation, just as music differs from articulate speech—a picture that attempted to convey only a general, not a concrete stimulation of the sight-centre sensitive to colour, and the pleasurable feeling accompanying and emphasising it, not only was to him necessarily incomprehensible, but, as he was a dogmatist of strong feelings, seemed to him an impertinence—

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nay, a profligacy and personal insult. Ruskin's criticism of a "Nocturne in Black and Gold" was a new version of the fable of the stork and the fox who invited each other in turn to dinner, improved to the point of libel. It was childish of Whistler to bring an action against the angry-minded art-inquisitor who required, as the first duty of a painter, the accuracy of a geologist, botanist, or engineer. He should not have expected justice from judges who saw and felt, not like himself, but like Ruskin. Judge Huddleston was of good faith when, in the immortal trial—which Whistler himself has preserved for posterity in his charming book, "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies"—he exchanged with the artist remarks like these: "Which part of the picture, then, really represents the bridge? Do you mean to say that this is the proper representation of a bridge?" (The question referred to "Battersea Bridge by Moonlight.") "I had no intention of giving an exact copy of the bridge." "Do these daubs of colour on it represent human beings?" "They represent what you please." "Is that thing under there a boat?" "It is a consolation to me that you recognise it. My whole object was only to produce a definite harmony of colours." He could hear this harmony of colours: Ruskin and Judge Huddleston could not. It was utterly futile to try to make them feel it.

His peculiarity of giving his pictures fine and

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pretentious names, such as "Black and Gold," "Blue and Silver," "Ivory and Gold," "Purple and Gold" is also generally misunderstood. People read "Silver and Blue," and saw indistinctly intricate brush-strokes of blue with elevations in dead white, representing, by way of indication, the high seas by night and in a mist. People hurried to the picture labelled "Ivory and Gold," expecting to gaze at something like an ancient chryselephantine marvel, or a Florentine masterpiece of splendour belonging to the days of the Medici, and what did they find? The lightly executed sketch of a woman in a yellow and white harmony, in which one looked in vain for the costly materials promised by the title. Not Philistines alone have shaken their heads over this, and evil-disposed critics have talked of hoaxing, foppery, and American bluff. They have wronged the artist bitterly. He was absolutely honest; his optical hypersensitiveness felt the colour with so heightened an appreciation of tone that he really saw gold, silver, and purple, where a less susceptible sense could only see dull yellow, deadened white, undecided reddish-brown. In all probability, it was long before he realised that others failed to observe, in the appearance of the actual things and his pictures of them, the rare metals and precious stones, the pearls and ivory, which gleamed from them to him. The common phrase, which is a precipitate of the universal thought and feeling, speaks of sun-gold

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and moon-silver. Sun and moon consequently make such a strong optical impression on even the average man that he thinks of gold and silver with the accompanying higher notes of ideas of splendour and magnificence. In Whistler's consciousness, however, these ideas began to be felt with gentle excitations, as whitish foam on dark waves in the night, or a woman's pale complexion in cream-coloured raiment yielded them. These delicate charms affected his sensitiveness just as the force of the sun or moon affects others. In maniacal excitation, of which the acutest form is madness, the brain of the sick person becomes so supersensitive that it reacts on the ordinary impressions of the senses just as on intolerably violent irritations. Moreover, certain poisons, of which hashish is the best known, derange the central nervous system into a condition of supersensitivity, in which the person poisoned feels himself inundated with floods of light, and sees a blinding brightness everywhere. The sensitiveness to which only illness or poison raises the average brain, was from nature the peculiarity of Whistler's sight-centres. He was conscious that in certain respects he had more than others, and he felt as superior to them as the Indian hunter does to a pale face of the towns on a game-beast's track, which the latter does not notice at all, whilst it gives the former a thousand clear indications. As an artist he was amiably modest, as a man amusingly

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arrogant. He did not flatter himself on his work, but on his finer organisation, *i.e.*, that he was kneaded out of better dough than the majority.

His supersensitiveness is expressed not only in his revel of colour; it is also curiously and graphically revealed in the impressions which he feels of the appearance of women, and which he conveys in his best portraits of women with an intensity no longer restrained within physiological bounds, but positively touching on the morbid. The intensity with which he feels young, high-bred, nervous women has quite an uncanny effect on me. I think of his "Lady Meux," and other capricious femininities, which were exhibited, in the last fifteen years, in the Paris *salons* and in London. He plants his model before us in some wonderful position. One stands with its back towards us, but turns its head, as if in a sudden caprice, to us. Another shows us its full face, and looks fascinatingly at us with pinched mouth and impenetrable eyes that think troubrous thoughts. These perverted, whimsical beauties wear remarkable and personal toilettes which, except the face and often the hands, reveal not a finger's breadth of skin, yet, in spite of the interposition of silk and lace, cry out for the fig leaf. They are bundles of sick nerves that, from the crowns of their heads to the tips of their fingers, seem to thrill with Sadic excitement. It is as though they wanted to entice men to wild attempts, and at the same time held

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their claws ready to tear, with a loud cry of pleasure, the flesh of the daring ones. Everything madly Mænadic, or inexorably Sphinx-like, that Ibsen was incapable of incarnating convincingly in his *Hedda Gabler* speaks distinctly from Whistler's female portraits.

They have become typical—typical for copying painters who exaggerate his neurotic women into the pornographic; typical for hysterical women, to whom they suggest poses and psychological states. Félicien Rops perhaps owes him nothing, although often enough his female demons seem Whistler-portraits divested of clothing; he has, from analogous organic hypotheses, independently attained to analogous conceptions of woman; but Zorn's, Boldini's, Alexander's women point to Whistler's demoniacs. The woman of a given epoch likes to form herself on the ideal which the art and poetry of the time give of the "interesting" woman. Thus Whistler, by means of his female portraits, became an educator of the æsthetically superfine woman of the present day; but Whistler, as an educator of woman, is to me incomparably less sympathetic than Whistler, the delicate appreciator and symphonist of colour.

## VIII

### GUSTAVE MOREAU

THE house in which Gustave Moreau spent the seventy-seven years of his life (1826-98) has been turned into a museum which contains nearly all his life's work, according to the catalogue 1132 items, from the copies and sketches of his youth, through the great finished paintings, down to the promising sketches, unfulfilled promises, of his old age. This collection falls little short of being complete. Perhaps, with the sole exception of the incomparably less interesting Wierz, there is no contemporary artist less often met with in public and private galleries than Gustave Moreau. He never sold his pictures, for he was lucky enough not to be obliged to do so; and, in the time of his maturity, he did not exhibit, for he shunned contact with men who were strange and unfamiliar to him. He who wishes to get to know him must, then, not shirk a pilgrimage to his house, which he inherited from his parents, inhabited by himself, and left as

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an unencumbered legacy to his native town. And the journey will be found worth the trouble, for Gustave Moreau is a curious phenomenon, affecting to melancholy and depressing, at least for men enamoured with life and action, but nevertheless full of mysterious, strangely pathetic allurement, even for those who prefer to breathe in air and sunshine under a bright sky.

Gustave Moreau stands apart from the mighty procession of French art in the nineteenth century, which was headed by the classic cohort, continued by the powerful band of the knights and squires of romanticism, and then unrolled itself before our eyes, in the legion of the bourgeois National Guard of Philistine academic routine-art, in the blouse-wearing troop of Realists, and, lastly, in the vacillating and oscillating sun-flower groups of Symbolism. He is not to be classed in this line of development. He went his way alone, deaf to the strains of the world of which he heard only those with which he himself was in harmony from the beginning. He had some few kindred spirits among contemporary painters, but he did not know them, and they did not know him either, and they exercised no influence on each other, but grew up independently of one another from the same conditions of like temperaments and peculiar moods that in the middle decades of the nineteenth century dominated narrow, exclusive circles, without being characteristic of this

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or any other time. For these temperaments are purely subjective, and accord with the external only so far as civilisation, when it has reached a certain grade of intensity and artificiality, always produces men with widely preponderating development of fancy, who are continually looking into their inner selves, and cannot withdraw their eyes from the fascinating spectacle of the wonderful events being enacted therein.

Moreau was just such a visionary. Remote from life, remote from actuality, he ever remained engrossed in his dream, and his noble art served him to retain his apparently multifarious, but, in reality, little changing dream-pictures. His museum is, then, a world by itself, with which the objective outer world has no more in common than have dreams and ravings with pictures of the actual which serve them as a stimulus, and furnish them with the elements of their subjective combinations.

Since the earliest stages of development of the spiritual life there have existed, side by side with men of observation and action, thinkers and dreamers who turn away from actualities, and build up around them a world of ideas which their excessively developed power of imagination could fashion, and endow with romantic life according to their own inclination and necessities. Thus arose all symbols, mythologies, fables, and superstitions that were enshrined in folk-lore, traditions, and, more

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especially, in all arts. Civilisation brings with it, by this means, besides its recognition of nature, a world of shadows invented by men freely—even if according to fixed psychological laws—like a ghostly double, the astral body of the real world; and our prescriptive education, which comprises in itself more æsthetic than positively scientific ingredients, renders us all double citizens of the real and the imaginary world. The majority of us chiefly live in the former, and visit the latter only in rare moments, which to some mean only recreation, but to others consecration and exaltation. A small minority, however, renounce their citizenship of the actual world and withdraw wholly to the world of imagination, which has been conjured up by the artistic fancy of mankind in thousands of years of creative activity.

Moreau was a citizen of the shadow-world, wherein he spent, an eternal Phæacian Sunday, and he never grew weary of lingering over its beauties. We learn by his representations to know it thoroughly in all its parts. Its landscapes are curiously jagged rocks which seem to be formed of corals; chalk plains with moon-glimmering reflections; mountain steeps in cumulous clouds; lakes and seas of oil, opalescent or charged with indigo. The animals that people this hypnotising paradise are unicorns with silvery coats, amazing dragons that are too curly to inspire fear, milk-white flying-horses, seven-headed hydras standing bolt upright on the tips

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of their tails, Stymphalian birds with women's faces, sphinxes, chimæras, and phœnixes. Even the flamingos, which come nearest to the terrestrial fauna, are here with the tips of their wings dipped, as it were, in blood, immeasurably more oddly pathetic than we know them. The flora exhibits (besides monumental marvels of Peru, which remind one of the rose windows in Gothic cathedrals) a "mystic blossom," a somewhat calla-like creation that sprouts forth from a luminous rock in the blue, mirroring mere, and on its slender summit, between great high leaves, bears the Blessed Virgin surrounded by a dazzling halo. The spiritual beings that move amidst these marvellous animals and plants, are gods, heroes, and poets: Tyrtæus, Orpheus, Hesiod, Sappho, Jason, Helena, Odysseus, Penelope, Pasiphae, Hercules, Dejanira, Œdipus, Jupiter, Apollo, the Muses, Semele, Leda, Europa, Prometheus, the Oceanides, Moses, Buddha, Jesus Christ, the Good Samaritan; the acts or, more correctly, the states in which these gods, demi-gods, and genii are represented are taken from all mythologies and theogonies. Every mysticism that has at any time or place arisen, like a silver haze, from the chaotic brain of man, has found admittance into Moreau's soul and flows up and down in it in changing pictures. As to orthodoxy of any sort or kind, he is quite unconcerned. His mind, when stirred, clings with the same delicacy to the saint

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of every origin, and he kneels, like the large-hearted heathen of antiquity, at the threshold of the most varied realms of divinity. The Pallas Athene in the hall of the king's palace at Ithaca, who enjoys the massacre of the suitors, is formed after the same type as the Blessed Virgin of the "mystic blossom"; hovering in long, trailing, white garments, radiant with a halo, ecstatic in look and mien and the clasping of her hands. The statues of the Chaldæan gods in the triumph of Alexander the Great imitate hieratic repose, and the Eastern posture of the Buddha-Amina statues. Prometheus on the Caucasian peak, palpitating beneath the vulture's beak, is allied by a family likeness to Christ scourged at the pillar. Jason on the poop of the *Argo*, and the fair man among the "Three Magi from the East," are cast in the same mould. Moses, looking down from the frontier hill on the blue plains of Canaan, and the great Pan, gazing at the spectacle of the procession of the spheres, seem brothers. Jupiter, with Semele on his bosom melting away with its heat, has the unapproachable sublimity of the canonical, the orthodox God the Father. For Moreau there are no dead religions; with a humble shyness and feelings of awe, he approaches all that has ever been reverenced by man.

Moreau's transcendental imaginations necessarily reveal themselves to the senses in other colours, as in other forms than those familiar to us by experience.

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An eerie light fills his pictures with the shimmering radiance of mother-of-pearl. The rarest, and, therefore, as jewels, the most treasured exceptional forms of the planetary world are the material of which everything in these pictures consists; the buildings are of gold and precious stones; there is a twinkle of rubies, sapphires, and emeralds everywhere. Moreau's amazing art produces from his palette of oil-colours effects that lie far outside its technique; they are huge Limoges plates with rivers of transparent enamel; paintings on glass with sun-illumined, jewel-like fragments of colour; Byzantine mosaics of bits of *lapis lazuli*, jasper, and cornelian. With this palette certain Quattrocentists such as Mantegna, certain Flemish artists as Van Eyck and Roger van der Weyden, as also Holbein, have in their pictures produced a small number of beauty-spots. No one prior to Moreau has painted big pictures entirely with it.

The first impression received from the Moreau Museum is that of having entered an enchanted castle, which has about it something of the treasure cave of the mountain sprites, something of the palace of the Elf-queen, as we know them from the "Thousand and One Nights," and German folk-stories. And if we have tarried longer, and our eyes have grown accustomed to the ripple of pearls and precious stones, of enamel and gold, we are astonished at the strange, weird stiffness and stillness of all these

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splendid creatures, and really feel we are surrounded by ghosts and spectres that have assumed only in pretence the guise of men.

Moreau formed his views on Baudelaire's rules. In the rooms of his museum we fancy we are looking at a series of book-illustrations for the *Fleurs-du-mal*.

“Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes,  
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.”

“I hate the movement which displaces the lines, and never do I weep and never laugh” would, as an inscription above the entrance, most fittingly convey in words the main feature of Moreau's art. For nearly all his pictures, but most of all for the “Triumph of Alexander the Great,” “Penelope's Suitors,” and the “Daughters of Thespius,” the verses of the *Paris Dream* would suit as a deliberate description.

“J'avais banni de ces spectacles  
Le végétal irregulier  
                . . .  
Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades,  
C'était un palais infini,  
Plein de bassins et de cascades  
Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni.  
                . . .  
C'étaient des pierres inouies  
                . . .  
Et sur ces mouvantes merveilles  
Planait. . . .  
Un silence d'éternité.”

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This *silence d'éternité* is the characteristic of Moreau's art. Here nothing moves; all is as stiff as Lot's wife after she was turned into a pillar of salt, as the men in the fairy-tale after the wizard has, by a wave of his magic wand, made the warm life stagnate in their veins. Moreau succeeds in reversing Pygmalion's miracle. His brush takes the life out of every human body he paints, and turns it into a statue. In none of his figures do we feel that he painted from a model. They all give the impression of being copies from statuary, and we are, for instance, not surprised that his manifestly unfinished "Moses Looking at the Promised Land" has a long bearded head as white as marble on an almost flesh-coloured body. We assume that Moreau has here simply reproduced the natural colour of his stone prototype. Among all his thousand works, one alone has really struck me as having something like a stir of passion traceable, viz., his "Messalina." The abominable empress, slave of her animal passions, is ascending the dirty couch at a den in the Suburra. The young vulgarian whom she has beckoned to her clasps her waist with both arms; the attendant torch-bearer of the crowned slut turns her head away from the repulsive sight. One can very well understand the movement of this slave who is ashamed of her mistress, but has only to obey and hold her tongue. The eagerness, too, with which the youth

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kneeling before the couch creeps up to the body that is offered him, is true and warm. Here is real life, even if in one of its lowest manifestations. But Messalina herself, though the protagonist of this tragedy of Cæsarean madness, is again entirely Moreau. With her stony repose in a situation with which it is so inconsistent, with her Assyrian fish-bladder-eyed profile, she resembles an idol in a Babylonian temple, and one wonders how the passion of the favoured one can endure the icy coldness gleaming from this idol.

His temperament indicated to him, from his earliest awakening to artistic impulse, the course of his education, just as it did, later, the choice of his material. As a youth in Italy he copied Pompeian mural paintings with fervour, and later revelled at the sight of the Quattrocentists. Here he recognised at first sight kindred souls ; here, as it were, his blood spoke. He tries, by imitating them piously, to keep them for reminiscences later on. His mystic bent to the old, the obsolete, the risen as from a grave, is a trait connecting him with the Præ-Raphaelites, who were almost his contemporaries. With them he has in common, too, the uncommonly exact and accurate technique. He is a cold but unerring draughtsman. All his accessory work, his architecture, ornaments, implements, and clothing, are marvels of archæological learning or, when this fails, of invention and patiently, painfully achieved execution. His con-

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scientiousness went so far that he painted perhaps twenty or more far advanced sketches of each detail of his large compositions ere he proceeded to the main work, and this, nevertheless, he often left unfinished, because he felt he had not done enough to satisfy his conscience.

Those empty, or merely vaguely filled-in spots instead of faces in big pictures, in which all besides —the patterns of the garment stuffs and carpets, the decorations on the splendid vases, the finery, weapons, capitals of the pillars — are precisely rendered as complete productions, give suddenly to the sympathetic an idea of the pains of this struggling spirit. Moreau shunned life, which was too stormy, noisy, and bustling for his morbid need of repose and quiet, but it did not cease to attract him as a mysterious riddle. He would gladly have understood it, comprehended it, and held it fast, but he had to admit to himself that he was powerless to reach it. A homunculus artificially generated in the retort, he can live only in his glass vessel, and must die if he ventures out of it ; but through his prison walls he gazes at the great, broad, free nature, replete with tempestuous life, and in the cold of his glassy den he shudders with longing for this world, so near and yet beyond his reach. His longing is, however, never to be appeased ; he will never feel the joys of the warm breath of life.

## IX

## EUGÈNE CARRIÈRE

How much better off are painters and art-lovers nowadays than in earlier times! Formerly, if you wanted to enjoy a picture you had to own it; if you wished to know a picture you were obliged to make a journey to it. If you liked an artist sufficiently to wish to surround yourself with his chief creations, or the whole of them, you had to have unlimited wealth and set up a gallery of your own. Copies are a mere aid to remembrance, and not a good one either. Executed by a dauber, they are worse than nothing; by a gifted artist, they give the copyist's, not the original creator's, personality. The older methods of multiplication also either furnish clumsy attempts at transmitting them, or they are peculiar, independent, artistic creations of another order than painting, which have their special beauty, but are unable to seize the most inward and subtle of the charms the painting possessed.

Since the latest developments of photography and the copying processes dependent on it, the

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case has been altered. If you would convince yourself of the almost marvellous perfection with which oil-paintings are transferred to paper nowadays, so that every stroke of the brush, however fine, every movement of the painter's hand, every paste, every unevenness in the colour plane, every effect of the canvas, ground-coating, and varnish, is reproduced in a life-like way, and you have actually before your eyes the whole personal work of the artist, then look at the handsome folio entitled : *L'œuvre de E. Carrière, Texte de Gustave Geffroy*, that has been published in Paris by H. Piazza et Cie., and contains the copy of 150 paintings and sketches by Carrière, 75 of which have been printed on Bristol paper, and 75 incorporated in the text. They lack colour, I admit. Only when photography renders this too, will the last word of genuineness in copying be pronounced. Meanwhile, we must be contented that we find again in the photograph the tonality of the colours and the effects of light and shade in the original relatively graded in respect of each other. With Carrière, however, the absence of colour is really of little importance, for he painted chiefly from a grey and brown palette, which can be very accurately reproduced by means of photography.

A hundred and fifty Carrières ! Who could pride himself on possessing such a treasure ? One would have to be an American multi-millionaire to enjoy such an æsthetic satisfaction as that. Now it is

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within the reach of every well-to-do individual. The 150 reproductions comprise about the whole of the great artist's life-work up to now. They disclose to every beholder, who is of good faith and possesses a sensibility for the beauties of painting, the key to the law of art which Carrière laid down for himself. They render it possible to follow the course of his development, which, at the beginning, is hesitating, then becomes decided and weighty, and carries the artist from the school to mastership, from tradition to uncompromising individuality.

Eugène Carrière was born on 17th January 1849, in the village of Gournay (Seine-et-Marne). His father was a Fleming from the north of France; his mother an Alsatian. His appearance corresponds to this probably pure Germanic origin. He is a big, broad man with strong bones and portly stoutness; white-skinned, blue-eyed, and fair-haired; slow of speech, thoughtful and reserved in his movements; dreamy when listening, unintrusive when silent, raising his voice little when saying modest, sensible words about things which he understands. He was still a child when his parents settled in the mother's home. He grew up in Strassburg, and was intended for an artisan. When he was eighteen he went to St Quentin, and had an opportunity of seeing the La Tours in the museum there. His talent was kindled by this unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled master. The beautiful crayon faces of La Tour taught him to feel the velvety splendour of youthful

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human skin, and meditate on the mystery of the artistic creation of plastic effects through merely intensifying or subduing the play of light. He began to draw and paint eagerly, and aroused sufficient belief in his vocation to be sent to Paris to the Academy of Art. What it offered him was practically nothing. Drawing copies of plaster models chilled him; even the professional life-model in the prescribed studied attitudes seemed to him futile and absurd. What meaning for him had this comedy of gladiatorial positions, ostentatious muscular development, clownish distortions expressive of no natural feeling or rational purpose, in which no human being would, if left to himself, indulge, and which, often enough, the body can assume and retain only by the artificial help of rests and props? What he longed for was life, warm life, such as pulsates in men of strong feelings, and is expressed by them in a straightforward, convincing way by looks and gestures.

The depression produced in him in the pupil-rooms in the *École des Beaux Arts* made him doubt himself. Luckily for him, amidst his general ill-luck, this spiritual crisis of his coincided with the great crisis of his country. The war broke out, and Carrière hastened as a volunteer to the front. He did his duty bravely in several battles and engagements, was taken prisoner at Sedan, and, as such, reached Dresden. The months of his imprisonment proved decidedly fruitful to him, for he spent his

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days in the picture gallery, and was shown by the Rubens pictures there, the ways which, up to that time, he had not clearly seen.

After the war was over, he resumed his orthodox studies at the Academy, and became a pupil of Cabanel. It exhibits a good testimony of the power of resistance in his nature that this most inaccurate portrait-painter of the Empire could not influence him, although he had for five years his misleading example before his eyes. In 1876 Carrière competed for the *prix de Rome*. He did not get it. That might have been predicted to him; the prize is the reward of the meritorious industry of the pupil, which flatters the teacher's *amour propre*. Carrière had then, however, emancipated himself from tutelage as an artist. He felt nowise humiliated or cast down by the failure of his purpose. With brave heart he drew from the occurrence the only true moral, viz., that not the approval of teachers, *i.e.*, of those who have succeeded, but the satisfaction of his artistic conscience must henceforward be the goal of his efforts. He renounced official recognition, and that was wise, for it preserved him from the pain of disillusion. From 1877 he exhibited annually in the *Salon*, but it was not before 1884 that the prize judges awarded him an "honourable mention," which can hardly, however, be called a reward. A year afterwards, he received the medal of the third class, which is "the last kindness," but at the same time the Baschkirtsew prize of 500 francs, which is

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awarded, not by the prize-committee, but by the Society of Artists by universal suffrage. In 1887 the Jury rose to the medal of the second class, and, at the Universal Exhibition of 1889, to an insignificant silver medal. With this the series of distinctions vouchsafed to him by the masters of his guild closes. His later honours—the ribbon and rosette of the Legion of Honour, the room reserved for his works at the Universal Exhibition of 1900, the purchase of his “Maternal Love” for the Luxembourg Museum, the commission to paint twelve bays in the Banqueting Hall of the Paris Hotel de Ville—were forced for him from the public authorities by independent opinion. They were the scanty revenue of fame, which the lonely man found when he ceased to seek it. It is characteristic of Carrière that of all the nonsense of medals and decorations there is not a word to be found in the monumental work dedicated to him. They were formerly regarded in France as the great events in the life of an artist. Carrière’s proud independence does not admit that they have any meaning at all, or deserve the most casual mention. The book enumerates all his works, even rough drawings, unfinished sketches, attempts at lithography. These are the deeds and events of his life. There is no room in the book for official certificates of industry and his elevation in the *Tchin*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Carrière was one of the co-founders of the Salon of the Champ de Mars in

<sup>1</sup> *Tchin* is Russian official *noblesse*.

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1890, which on principle repudiated the system of rewarding meritorious youths by testing and directing superior officers, and rebelled against turning artists into an hierarchy by means of conventional marks of rank.

Carrière has formed a manner of his own, which he discovered by himself, and asserted it victoriously despite of all kinds of opposition. Every layman sees at the first glance that his pictures are full of grey vapour. A sometimes transparent, at other times thick mist envelops his figures, and makes their different parts stand out with unequal distinctness. "A whim," exclaims superficiality; "a dodge to astonish," grumbles the *blasé* man-of-the-world, who thinks himself cunning. It is neither the one nor the other. The origin of the curious exhalation hovering about his figures is to be sought in his own need for representing the æther in which all planetary life is displayed. His sense of truth took umbrage at the painting in vogue, even that of the masters, which sets beings and objects in space, without giving any suggestion that it is not empty, but filled with a gas possessing optical and kinetic qualities. It is all very well trying, by established toning of the local colours, and blurring of the contour lines, to make the fact perceptible that the figures are surrounded by air; but these customary means of expression failed to satisfy Carrière, and he is not the only one they left dissatisfied. A whole generation of painters, about 1870, had the

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annoying feeling that air did not get its rights in art, and made obstinate efforts to find a formula for announcing the presence of air with an emphasis that could not be neglected. Sisley, Monet, Pissarro, thought to solve the problem by refraction and iridescent radiation which would render apparent in the painting the visible motion of the air, its vibration under definite relations of illumination and heat. The object is only very imperfectly attained. The attempt is justified, and deserves respect. Carrière sets about the matter differently, in a more direct and *naïve* way. The decomposition of white light into its spectrum, as the dotters and stipplers practise it, proves, I admit, that the rays of light move in a material medium, as they would otherwise have no reason for resolving themselves into their component parts ; but, in order to infer air from the prismatic colours, a man must be a physicist, and it requires a labour of thought that has nothing in common with an immediate impression of the senses, such as must, first and foremost, proceed from an optical work of art. Carrière, then, found even the impressionist rule too learned. He preferred simply to exaggerate, and, as it were, to make palpable, the properties of air, which is neither absolutely colourless nor absolutely transparent. Thus arose the thin grey air in which his figures are bathed, ranging from the most delicate mist to the thickest smoke, but always transparent.

Directly he found his method or manner, it became

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alive in his hands. In that his peculiarity consists, and in that he shows himself a great artist by the grace of God. Smoke is to him a medium of expression of amazing range. He employs it almost as the engraver on copper or mezzotint does the "burr." It is a layer of veils which he diminishes or increases as the effect proposed demands. Here he withdraws the covering. There he suffers it partly or entirely to remain, and by such means obtains, by the most natural and, apparently, the least troublesome way, a recession of the non-essential, an amazing relief of the essential, a clearness in the expression of his thought, such as not one of his contemporary painters possesses. At the first glance at a picture of Carrière, one is very forcibly directed to what was important to the painter. One positively cannot wander into what is unimportant, or be diverted from the main thing. It sounds paradoxical, but is literally true: Carrière understood how to make vapour the medium of the highest clearness, to make mystery the gate of an unreserved revelation. That, I admit, his imitators cannot discern in him. It is easy to daub smoke in a picture, but that is not all. Vapour must not be an excuse for bungling draughtsmanship; it must not mercifully cover defects in form. In order not to favour any fraud, it makes a masterly accuracy in modelling a primary condition. To permit oneself such noble economies and condensations one must be as accurate a draughtsman as Carrière. The

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veiling of the greater part is only, then, admissible, when the lesser left unveiled is perfect.

The subject of Carrière's portrayal is always life of deep feeling—self-forgetting maternal love, childhood's gracious innocence, pathetic tenderness of father, brothers, or sisters. He has never worked from the peddling model who can be hired at five francs an hour, and who poses only with the body, not the soul. His model is his own family, with the whole range of idiosyncrasies which their existence by night and day comprises. What the tender husband and father observed with delighted eyes at all hours, that the painter has uniquely fixed on canvas: the mother resting in bed with her baby at her breast; that sweet, shapeless little lump of human flesh which is a wee boy that the elder sister fondles; the children eating or being fed at table; the washing and dressing of the little one, which the mother and elder sister carry out as a pleasant game with a doll; the mother's anxiety as she cradles the fever-stricken child in her arms, and tries to quiet it; dressing the eldest girl for her confirmation—a prelude to that affecting moment when the mother, with trembling hands and streaming tears, will place the bridal wreath on her head; the pride of the parents when marshalling all their five children in a row; the gloomy seriousness of the tiny school-girl puzzling at the work-table over her first task. Carrière, when painting his family life, painted the life of mankind. His large, epic style of feeling preserved him from falling

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into *genre*. He remained monumental even when painting details. He is as little sentimental as Goethe in "Hermann und Dorothea"; nevertheless, tears rise when we gaze on his pictures. The incident disappears, and we stand before the Eternal, which it comprises; before Love, which keeps the world together.

The same feature is distinguishable also in his portraits; they enoble the model by spiritualising it. He gives only just enough of the anatomy to reveal the soul. And when he sets himself greater and more highly differentiated tasks ("The Gallery of the Belleville Theatre," the "Holy Women at the Foot of the Cross"), he accomplishes them by bringing forth the feelings and thoughts which have brought together the persons concerned, and determine their bearings and movements.

What individual works scattered in exhibitions and museums have not proved to every one is made indisputably clear by the 150 reproductions in the Piazza book, viz., that Carrière is one of the noblest, charest, most deeply-feeling artists of to-day, who has created for himself a peculiar technique, particularly dangerous for imitators, but natural to himself, and, therefore, in his hand, justified.

### SOME OF CARRIÈRE'S PICTURES

"The Belleville Theatre." — The light, mystic vapour which fills and exhales through Carrière's pictures, like delicate bluish-white clouds of incense,

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does not, as a rule, exert a disturbing influence. In this picture, quite one of his most important ones, his brush seems to have betrayed him. He has grown more material than is usual with him. The "Belleville Theatre" is so densely enveloped in smoke that hardly anything can be distinguished amidst the clouds. Yet what splendid discoveries are to be made if you make a violent effort to penetrate the darkness, into which a venture may only be made with a diver's helmet and an air-pipe! We see—or, rather, we surmise—the third and a part of the fourth gallery of the People's Theatre. The suburban audience that fills these rows, gives itself unrestrainedly up to the magic of the spectacle. It lives not its own life, but that of the heroes in the piece. To this audience Hecuba is everything. The wide-opened eyes lost in reverie, the cheeks sunk sorrowfully in their hands, the shoulders contracted by fear, the bodies almost helplessly leaning on one another, betray the intensity with which these poor people have fled out of themselves into illusion. What is truth, what is deception, if a poetical word, and that, too, most likely the word of a wretched melodrama, can snatch away small trades-people and artisans—probably sore oppressed by the needs of existence and more than full of their own troubles—so far from all their griefs that they forget their misery and think they are vividly experiencing a new lot? That would be the Buddha philosophy of this

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amazing picture if we could but distinguish all it contains. Carrière has painted the profound doctrine of Maia and Nirvana. It is a pity he has covered it with so thick a veil that it remains impenetrable even to the eyes of the initiated.

"Christ on the Cross" will give to those capable of feeling the impression of a great, artistic experience. The mystical tragedy, from which a world-religion draws its emotion, is presented with the simplicity and suppressed pain with which a father reports to his son the tragic death of the mother. All subsidiary work that might prove distracting is avoided. No thieves, no Captain Longinus, no Roman legionaries, no fanatical spectators; not one of the aids in men or things with which the classics of painting are wont to complicate the event of Calvary, with the object of making it more impressive. Nothing save the life-sized figure of the Saviour, who has ended His sufferings, and Mary, who leans against the Cross so as not to break down altogether. On the face of the corpse the peace of consummation has sunk; unutterable grief wastes that of the Mother. The form floats in a soft, unearthly light; on the latter expressive shadows strive. The repose of the dead Christ, which would appear painless and almost cheerful were it not that a slight trait of suffering was fixed around the mouth, dawns like a consolation over the dark despair which fills the soul of the living mother.

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If she suffers humanly, as a mother, so that she would fain die of woe, still redemption and exaltation also arise for her from the act of salvation. If one has ever heard Palestrina's "Stabat Mater," it re-echoes in his soul at the sight of Carrière's picture. It has issued from the same deep emotion as the tear-soaked *terzine* of Jacopone da Todi and Palestrina's sobbing hymn. Carrière abandons himself to his feelings with the same earnestness as the Franciscan friar and the choirmaster of St Peter's. It is hard for me to admit that he shares their pious belief. I assume that the Mother's grief has, in the main, inspired him. This strong feeling has, doubtless, made him susceptible of the sacredness of the symbolism in the death on the Cross; through the human he will have raised himself to an inkling of the superhuman. Let us not forget that Carrière is the painter of that "Motherhood," the gem of the Luxembourg Museum, which depicts a young mother with a child on her lap and another beside her, revelling in the sight of her little ones—her treasures—with adorable tenderness in look and mien, in the pose of her body and the movement of her arms. Carrière has a wonderfully deep feeling for maternal love, in joy as in sorrow. Unconsciously and involuntarily, he has conceived his subject not with the spirit of a believing Christian, but with the broken heart of Mary. He might confidently have called his "Christ on the

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Cross," too, "Maternity," like his masterpiece in the Luxembourg; the one is a companion-picture of the other; the tragedy of maternal love, according to its idyl.<sup>1</sup>

There were cases in which the employment of Carrière's plan of the delicate grey veil of enveloping mist was not successful. I have, for instance, been obliged to make reservations in respect of his "Theatre in Belleville." In the "Christ on the Cross" it is organically developed from the subject. The veil of mist shrouds the incident in the weird twilight which is the prescribed atmosphere of miracle and the mysteries of faith. Beyond the figures in the foreground of the Crucified and the Blessed Virgin we divine, in the semi-dark distance, a great city, at the back of which, on the horizon, a twinkling white light, like the still uncertain brightness of a young dawning day, arises. Our powers of imagination may fill with life the whole of this profound space wherein dawn is at odds with night—with the life of a whole townsfolk enjoying their revenge or weeping for woe, oppressed with foreboding or hopefully confident.

Here is symbolism in that high sense in which every true work of art is symbolic. The picture is at the same time intellectual and transcendental; the rationalistic beholder, who neither seeks nor wishes to find a mystery, has before him the

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, of joy or suffering.

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humanly affecting drama of the mother who bewails her son who has died unmistakably in a noble task. He sees sights he can understand—the peace of death and a mother's deepest pain—presented with unsurpassable truth. He enjoys the charm of perfect form, marvellous warmth of colour, produced with the simple means of *gouache* toning and a very faint heightening by touches of red, and an extremely interesting distribution of soft light glimmering from the dark background. The mystically minded beholder sees all this, and he sees, besides, the divine element in the Crucifixion and the sorrow-stricken Mother, the terribly threatening subversion of the natural order in the darkness brooding over the city and fields, and the promise in the light arising in the distance. What the rationalist sees in the work of art is sufficient to arouse his feeling and admiration. The mystic's wonder and feeling will be powerfully strengthened by religious emotion.

"Portrait of my Wife."—He who is guilty of the error of confounding gaudiness with coloration might find a guide in this work. A few bright tones in the spiritualised, almost transparent face; a fur collar of a warm, rich brown; a gay, red flower in the girdle, comprise all that Carrière employs as colour media, in order to conjure up a harmony of lulling melody and, at the same time, of all but hypnotising intensity. That is precisely the whole mystery; it is not a question of the noise, but of

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the harmony. Three colour values, chosen with exquisite taste, placed on the right spot in the floating white and pearl-grey cloud which constitutes Carrière's manner, and the impression of the colour mystery is produced with greater success and depth than by a palette on which all the seven colours of the rainbow are keeping a witch's festival.

"The Kiss before Going to Sleep."—A painting of marvellous range of feeling. A mother with her daughters, from the grown-up one to the suckling infant at her breast. The big girl bends over her mother's shoulder, as the latter is sitting, and takes her good-night kiss from the lips of the head turned to her. The baby has fallen asleep whilst feeding at the maternal bosom. The third, half-grown-up, has likewise been overcome by sleep, as she leans helplessly, with her whole weight, on her mother. The last twines her fondling fingers in her mother's hand outstretched to her. The mother is the central point of the picture. From her gushes the force that penetrates, encompasses, attracts, and holds together the rest of the figures. Love it is which collects these beings and unites them in a marvellous circle. Thus they become a symbol of the force that has built up the universe itself, and keeps it in its eternal order. And this self-same love, which knits these hands in each other, bends these bodies to each other, brings these lips together, which is visibly the motive and attractive force, in all these simple but incomparably eloquent lines of movement, has

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also guided the magic brush capable of expressing so great a theme. He who at the sight of this lofty work does not feel all the hardness in him melting in joy stands outside humanity. Moreover, there is not a trace of declamation, or purpose, or *tremolo* in its execution; no prettily pietistic rhetoric. Not a single adjective, but only neuter substantives, as in Roman inscriptions. That is precisely the receipt, which holds good in all times and in all places, for monumental works: eternal feelings expressed in eternal forms.

"The Engaged Couple," like "Maternity," like his portraits of a married couple, a young maiden, etc., etc., are unapproachable works. His grasp of the essential in phenomena, his economy of form, are of supreme craftsmanship. It is in this direction, I think, that the future development of painting lies. It will soon be over with mere transcription of nature, however clever; certainly, on the not very distant day when colour photography will be handed over from the experimental laboratory of the physicist, to professional use. Then the individual stand-points of observation will alone hold good. People will want views, not as the mechanically reproducing, dead object-glass, but as the inspired eye of the artist sees them. Pictures will have to be a selection, an interpretation, an emotional excavation of the optic phenomenon; every picture an anthology of vision; and the personality of the artist revealing himself in it, will be the fascination of his work, its value and

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its beauty. Let no one say: "These are trivialities. It has always been so since plastic art existed." The plastic artist was hitherto always in the first place a depictor. His soul revealed itself only discreetly in his works. Carrière goes far beyond what he sees: he paints souls; he paints feelings. In his representation the inexpressible becomes an incident. A fugitive movement, a pose, a line of head, neck, shoulders, or hand in which unconsciousness is manifested, when self-control is relaxed for a moment; these treacherous means of expressing mood, which the will is not always able to influence—these are the elements with which he works. He discloses the impulses, up to their most delicate moods, which are the causes of movements and deportment. To such a spiritual art must painting be developed. And this is why I call Carrière's pictures the art of the future.

## X

### PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES is dead, and his influence is dying; his School is desolate, and I see now hardly any stragglers worrying themselves to paint with his palette of pale moonlight. So it is no longer necessary to attack him. It is enough to explain his spiritual transformation and his successes.

When he attained the maturity of his powers, that Naturalism was the trump-card in painting, of which Bastian Lepage's abominable "Reaper," whose brutalised grimace grins at the visitor to the Luxembourg Museum, was admired as the highest achievement. The young critic had eyes only for this art. The multitude dared not question the fulsome praise squandered on the works of the naturalists; but their inner voice was not mute. They had qualms of conscience about their culpable cowardice, and were quite well aware that naturalism, which was lauded to them as Progress and the Future, was in reality the negation of all art. Then Puvis de Chavannes stepped forward with his big

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wall-paintings, which put symbolism, sacred legend, and history on the stage, on a literary background, and reunited them to tradition, which had been disowned or scoffed at by naturalism, out of barbaric ignorance or vulgar arrogance. The multitude, whose inward feelings partisan criticism outraged, turned forthwith to the painter who seemed to them a deliverer and an avenger. He was a living protest against the art of the vulgar, the hideous, and the commonplace ; against the art of the mechanically dull copying of a soulless reality. He took pains to serve beauty. He showed unmistakably the object of his spiritualising his figures and actions. Before his pictures one could once more dream. After prose, after vulgar, slangy prose, it was verse. People did not even ask if the verses were good ; people were satisfied with mediocre verses, provided they were verses. To Puvis de Chavannes his fundamental, academic instincts had given the direction ; but whilst he followed his bent, he became, without intending it, and without previously knowing it, the file-leader of the right-about turn, which began in "the 'eighties" and has now long ended.

In a period of idealism he would have been one of the many. People would not have noticed him or would have found in him much to take exception to : the banality of his symbols, the impersonality, smoothness, and polish of his draughtsmanship, the intentional incoherence of his compositions. During the predominance of naturalism, his academic banality

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itself seemed a courageous act, and seekers after the ideal even accounted his most obvious faults and weaknesses as excellencies in him.

He got his faded, spectral colours by imitating the fresco painters of the Quattrocentro. His ideal of picturesque beauty united in inseparable association the stateliness of the old monumental wall-paintings with their fadedness ; and when he wished to paint in their style and produce their æsthetic effects, he at once gave his pictures the faint coloration which had never been intended by the Quattrocentists, but which their works have suffered through the devastating force of five centuries. The obliterated, remote, ghostly qualities of this faded type of painting came to meet a morbid mood of the time. This mystic coloration harmonised with the prevalent mysticism. The decadents were thankful to him for his moon-stricken colouring ; those athirst for beauty for his conversion to classical tradition ; and so he became a great man through the sins of the naturalists and their critical heralds.

Puvis was the first academical and recognised master in France who began to paint the morbid. His whim is chalk-wash. He covers, on principle, his pictures with a white, semi-transparent broth that extinguishes all the colours. His eye detests colour. His glance has a sort of chloridising effect ; it takes the colour out of everything it ranges over. With him, however, morbidity is natural and not an affectation. He has that horror of all that is loud, full, and

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impressive, which marks the nervous man, whom every rough touch pains. It is well with him only when nature whispers, when her looks are veiled in a fine mist, when all life in her is motionless. In his soul reigns a melancholy absence of sound, and he likes to carry this into the outer world also. Moreover, the multiplicity of living forms confuses and repels him; it is too full of motion and gaudiness. He simplifies, therefore, all lines which thus lose their distinctive individuality. He retains only what is typical of the phenomenon; he infuses his style into all that his brush and pencil touch, and this cold stylisation is then called by people his "idealism."

Has Puvis laid himself open to the reproach that all his figures are awkwardly typical because he cannot draw? We might almost think so. It is only as a reply to such a reproach that we can understand his exhibiting in 1896 several hundred drawings, preliminary studies for all his chief works. After a minute inspection of these smaller and greater sheets of sketches scarcely indicated or industriously executed, of figures scarcely outlined or carefully shaded in lead-pencil, Indian ink, red and other coloured chalks, we are bound to feel every respect for his industry and conscientiousness. For the originality of his talent, too? That to me is questionable. If I gaze on the studies of Leonardo and Albrecht Dürer, I am, in a very short time, overmastered by an inexpressible emotion. A holy of

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holies is revealed: the most secret feelings of an artist's soul which would fain become conscious of itself whilst seeking to give shape to the emotion that is urging it. You can see the struggle with the resistance of the material, the mustering of all his forces, in the majority of cases the artist's victory, oftentimes his despairing confession of impotence. A feature of the phenomenon—a fugitive yet expressive movement has made its impression on the artist. He hastens to fix his conception. At first in a few hasty strokes, which are then strengthened, deepened, emphasised, and developed. Five times, ten times, till the artist desists disheartened, or till the vision is overcome and fixed by a spell in its whole force and verity, in its distinctive character that is never to be repeated. In Puvis I observed with astonishment the contrary process. The first sketch has always the greatest individuality, every later state of the figure shows it less differentiated, and more reduced to an average type lacking expression. He never ascends, he goes down. The artist's emotion in face of the phenomenon—the impulse to produce in the rapture of an intuition is never traceable in him. None of the sheets is the arena of that awful fight waged by talent against the hostile demon of the material, which reminds me of the night-long struggle of Jacob with the spectre at the ford Jabbok. The starting-point of the work is correct, ice-cold *métier*. It progresses to simplifications that are just so many evasions of difficulties,

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and it finally arrives at insignificant puppets. "That was intentional," cry the painter's eulogists. So much the worse if it was intentional. But was it really intentional? That is the question. Often enough, as an afterthought, a person imagines he is exercising volition, whilst, as a matter of fact, he is constrained. For him who has learnt to see in all works documents bearing on their creator's psychology, the drawings of Puvis are proof positive that this highly famous man never glanced at the world with an artist's eye, but that he was originally a cold, academical technician, who, later on, by pure reason and without attaining the slightest fervour, has subtilised a peculiarity: the imitation of faded frescoes in colour, archaic indifferentiation in drawing, abstract literary symbolism in his subjects.

In fact, what is unreal and dream-like about his vision is not only determinative in regard to his archaically simple, almost poor drawing and his pallid colour, but also the choice of his subject. He likes best to portray allegories, in which the figures are reduced to the *rôle* of symbols. When he cannot be allegorical, in his famous wall-paintings at the Pantheon, for instance, which tell the legend of St Géneviève, he satisfies his craving for spectre painting by spiritualising the given historical figures into fleshless, bloodless denizens of the ballad of the land of Thule. In individual and very rare instances, he finds a material organically suitable for his moon-struck style of painting. In

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such cases, of course, he strives after extraordinary effects; for instance, with his "Poor Fisherman" in the Luxembourg Museum. This dreadfully poor, emaciated man—more a shadow than a human being—who, sorrowfully but resigned, stands in his old patched boat, drops his wretched net into the sluggish, greyish-yellow water, and is surrounded and, as it were, fixed by the dead lines of a flat melancholy landscape, breathes a disconsolateness and abandonment that, at the sight of him, "humanity's whole sorrow" seizes the beholder.

Once again, in his last period, Puvis lighted on one of those rare subjects which not only bear, but demand his peculiar methods of execution, and out of this lucky encounter came forth a masterpiece, viz., the fresco which concludes his Géneviève cycle.

St Géneviève has stepped out of her cell on to the balcony of her convent and lets her glance roam over Paris. At her feet lies the slumbering city; in the foreground surge the red-tiled roofs, between which soar a few tree-tops in the luxuriant verdure of midsummer; in the distance stretch the soft hill lines of a cheerful landscape, the green of whose meadows is interrupted, here and there, by the white mass of a convent or abbey. Slender lilies and *gladioli* bloom in noble vessels on the balcony. In the bare cell, the door of which is wide open behind the saint, the smoking flame of a lamp of antique pattern smoulders. At the summit, in a deep blue sky, hangs the full moon, which softly illuminates city

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and landscape, and casts an eerie gleam on the curled leafage of the tree-tops. Immersed and bathed in its soft radiance, the saint stands there, unearthly with her thin, ascetic countenance and her white nun's habit, which from her headcloth to the trailing hem of her garment flows down in unbroken, perpendicular lines, and seems to lift up her soul in a quiet, ecstatic prayer for the slumbering town, whose peaceful prosperity is a work of her solicitous love. Here Puvis's peculiar method triumphs in every feature. Here his temperament needed only to give itself its natural scope to attain the highest asthetic result. What elsewhere is intolerable affectation becomes here the honest revelation of a mood. The subdued harmony of violet and blue in different gradations of intensity that blend softly into one another is legitimate in the picture of a summer night, which takes its sole spectral light from the moon and an oil-lamp. The paleness of the flesh is understandable in the aging nun who mortifies herself by prayer, vigils, and fasting. The simplicity of the drawing, which is reduced to a few straight and slightly though expressively curved lines, finds its defence in the dusk of the semi-transparent night which suppresses all individualities of forms; and leaves only for us general, essential features, and these rather surmised than clearly seen. Thus here a special subject finds its special and fully adequate means of expression, and the work becomes a model of what is termed style in the highest sense.

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A rejuvenation seemed to come over Puvis when he seized once more on the Géneviève theme which had occupied him from the days of his youth. This theme was to him what the theme of Faust was to Goethe: while the octogenarian was engrossed in it, something of the flame that glowed in the young man of twenty fired him, and the last cry of *Una pénitentium*<sup>1</sup> is still an after-thrill of Gretchen's passion. Puvis, too, appears to have thought or felt "*Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten!*" when he set about painting this concluding picture of the Géneviève cycle; and for the last strophe of his ballad, which dies away so sadly, he found again some of the power and unction which secures to its predecessors their glorious place in the century's Art.

If the brazen foreheads of the babbler who have the chief say in the art criticism of the time were at all capable of a decent blush, they would turn red with shame at his series of frescoes in the Pantheon. People had the audacity to claim Puvis for some "modernity" or other, in which certain moods of our time were said to be incorporated. The only time when one can wholly surrender oneself to him, he is absolutely of no time. What, in that instance, fascinates in him is nothing relating to the present, and still less to the future, but the past and the remote past, the atavistic. His life's great work is a legend of a saint, which he has treated after the manner of a legend with the feelings

<sup>1</sup> Faust : II. Theil ; *sub fin.*

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of a primitive who, in the manner natural to him—the manner of about the fourteenth century—tells a story that is to him a living verity, in which he believes, as those souls believe it for whose edification he presents it, and which moves and touches him as it does the beholders who will fold their hands devoutly before his work. Puvis cannot reckon on such a reception from his contemporaries, for whom he designs his creation. To us the legend is strange; it is a bit of learned literature which we look at critically, and in which we cannot be expected to plunge believably. If Puvis, nevertheless, overcomes our opposition, and can suggest to us for moments the child-like faith and all the emotions of dead and gone times that are connected with that faith, he has achieved something more difficult than the primitives, for whom the spirit of their time was no opponent, but a confederate.

Blessed are the ignorant. Their lack of suspicion secures them, whenever they glance at the world, the enthusiasm of discovery and invention, and every phenomenon delights them as something unprecedented. During the lifetime of Puvis de Chavannes his peculiar style was particularly extolled by his eulogists. They exhibited him as a God-sent foundling; as a Moses of painting, without ancestors, himself an ancestor; as a great solitary wandering apart from the multitude through the history of contemporary art. Such phrases can be uttered only by one who rejoices in the most refreshing ignorance

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of the historical continuity of things. Puvis is of a family. The expert can name his forefathers and relations; he finds their lineaments repeated—often coarsened and disfigured—in him.

Puvis, this great, original genius of his admirers, is an impoverished descendant of Cornelius. He represents the worst aberration in art that this century has seen, viz., thought-painting. Nowadays it is no longer necessary to prove that abstraction is the negation and abrogation of plastic art. This maxim, fortunately, has become an æsthetic commonplace. Painting has to do only with sensuous phenomena; abstraction distils from the sensuous one quality, which, since it is common to many phenomena, is reminiscent of many phenomena, yet is itself not phenomenon. He who feels the impulse to paint not views but thoughts, proves that in his innermost soul he is not a painter, but a rhetorician, and that he has deceived himself marvellously as to the method of expression natural and organic to him. Cornelius's painting presented thoughts, religious, philosophical, and historical dogmas, in a picture-language considerably less clearly than might have been done in well-ordered words. It pleased all those whose soul was seven times sealed against understanding what really constitutes painting. As long as the Cornelius tendency was dominant in Germany, that country was depressingly behind in the art life of the period. As soon as Cornelius and his school were overthrown, a sound development of German painting

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began. And now, at the close of the nineteenth century in France, in the France which has produced, in landscape, Corot, Rousseau, Diaz, Harpignies: in figure-painting, Millet, Courbet, Bonnat, Roll: from which has come the return to nature and the renaissance of art, the allegorical thought-painting of a Puvis has been praised as the greatest advance, as the latest step in development! The snake biting its own tail still remains the truest symbol of human activity that the self-knowledge of the race has as yet discovered.

And how far, in his special direction, Puvis lags behind his obsolete predecessors! A Cornelius, Kaulbach, and Stilke, displayed, after all, in the invention of their symbols, a rich power of imagination which might have been worthy of better things. Their two-legged abstractions were so honestly drawn that they deceived with regard to their phantom-like nature, and could give themselves out to be real creatures of flesh and blood. Puvis's invention, on the other hand, is so poor that it whines pitifully for alms. The representations which kindle his imagination seem derived solely from an illustrated handbook of mythology for girls' schools. For an example of this, one has only to look at the wall-paintings for the Boston Library, which are among the most important work that Puvis has done, at least so far as their range and claims are concerned. The first represents the inspiring Muses "greeting with acclamations light carrying the Genius." From a

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schematic landscape with sickly pale meadows, a sea of ultramarine blue, and spanned by a sky the colour of autumn foliage, nine female figures are flying to meet a delightfully insignificant naked youth striding on clouds of wadding. This youth holds in each hand a powerfully brilliant electrical lamp, evidently the Teslasch alternating current light, as wires are nowhere visible. The least fault of this picture is that the Muses are not aspiring in voluntary, independent flight, but hang motionless in the air in a passive attitude, like Giotto's angels and saints, who have not yet learnt to fly. Its mortal sin is that it wishes to represent in painting a vulgar, rhetorical arrangement composed of a number of abstractions.

Beside this allegory, Puvis opens five windows on his world of dreams. Naked shepherds observe, in a southern night, the course of the stars, and are themselves observed by a young woman who is creeping out of a lowly leafy hut. A man in a sort of Roman dress looks thoughtfully at some bee-hives, whilst peasants in the distance are busy working in the fields. A greybeard is sitting by the sea, from which a steep cliff emerges. On its summit a man is chained almost in the attitude of the Crucified. The shadow of an approaching vulture falls on him. Maidens emerging from the sea hover round him with disconsolate gestures. We must necessarily recognise Prometheus and the Oceanides in the scene. Another old man,

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who is blind, receives laurel branches from two young beauties. A haughty dame stretches her arm with magic gestures over a mysterious abyss that has engulfed mighty marble buildings, pillars, and woodwork. Behind the woman stands a youth with a torch and book in his hand. I have described in brief what one actually sees. Puvis means the star-gazers for Chaldæan shepherds; the Roman for Vergil; the greybeard in front of the Prometheus-rocks for Æschylus; the blind man for Homer receiving the laurels from the hands of the Iliad and Odyssey personified; the enchantress for history conjuring up the past. We are to read still more into it. The Chaldæans signify astronomy; Vergil bucolic poetry, Æschylus dramatic, Homer epic; the conjurer up of the dead and ruined, Clio. Thus we have before us five polished planes of the prism of man's spiritual activity, five domains of the Muses—a fitting decoration for a library. These abstractions are painted in an abstract style. The human beings are schematic drawings as if taken from statues for illustrating an academic canon. They live psychically only through their artificial gestures—not through their mask—visages without mien of glance. The landscapes are geometrical combinations of rocks which a Cyclopean stone-mason has hewn in ancient style; of mountains whose ridge stretches in architectural lines; of evenly-coloured masses of deep-blue sea, pale-green sky, and sap-green grass country. The land is called Utopia, and

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is inhabited by Outis: in English, Nowhere and Nobody. The indigo, emerald, and turquoise tone is pleasant to the eye, especially as Puvis has here, contrary to his murderous habit, not massacred the living colours. But nothing except the harmony of colours appeals to me in these pictures. It is not painting: it is writing. It does not presuppose in me any feeling for art, but only a decent, classical education. It taps on my school satchel. Before these five Puvis de Chavannes pictures, I think of a highly-educated Japanese, learned in all the wisdom of his country, with the most delicate feelings for line and harmony of colours; an appreciator of Hokusai and the other great masters of Japan: he will receive no impression at all from Puvis's works; he will look upon the figures as phantoms, the scenes as so much childishness; he will not have an inkling what these forms, remotely resembling human beings, are doing, or what they mean. For he is not acquainted with the Greek and Latin classics, and without this hypothesis the works of Puvis are dead symbols, incomprehensible to any one unprovided with the special key, and without the natural constraining power of plain human truth and beauty. The provoking over-estimation of his work by corybantic critics justified every severity against Puvis de Chavannes in his lifetime. Now his appreciation no longer requires polemical pricks, and we can say that his *Géneviève* cycle secures him a permanent place in the history of art; that his

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great allegorical frescoes are cold, dead, sprawling, pretentious subtleties ; and that neither his drawing nor his colour sanctify him as a master and model. His importance consists in this, *i.e.*, that in his time the longing for beauty took him as a cloak for a passionate confession. The Puvis cult was, in the main, a reaction against Realism. By the exaggeration with which he was honoured may be measured the greatness of the disgust which his contemporaries felt for naturalistic art.

## XI

# BRIGHT AND DARK PAINTING

CHARLES COTTET

A GENERATION ago opposition arose against gloomy painting. Down with the twilight cellar painting! Down with the studio sauce! Hurrah for the open air! Long live free light! With this war-song a brave, hot-blooded band stormed art academies and studios of masters, and, shouting for joy, planted their silver and violet banner on the posts they had taken. For two whole decades the art exhibitions presented a cheerful, festive aspect. It was always Sunday. The glow of a southern noon rested over whole walls. From the hundreds and thousands of canvases, big and little, streamed the gleaming sunlight in its full glory. Men, beasts, things, landscapes—all swam in luminous splendour which, at most, patches of violet shadow subdued timidly. Nature seemed to know no other conditions of light than those of Capri in July. About the turn of the century this suddenly began to change. In some pictures the light went out.

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Certain painters again discovered the darkness of evening, of leaden-clouded winter's day, of thickets, of rooms. On some palettes the eternal white and violet was replaced by the old brown, black, and olive-green of our fathers. The phenomenon became, year by year, more marked. To-day the change is accomplished. Free light is thrown away after the old moons. Painting has grown sick of noonday. There is an atmosphere of twilight in all the pictures. The young painters—the victors of the day—use as much asphalt, mummy, and umber, as did the old ones thirty years ago. Whole ranges of walls in the Paris *salons* lie as in deep shadow, and we may go through several rooms before finding a creature represented as “breathing in rosy light.”

What satires these *salons* are on the consequential, high-stepping, deep-thinking drivel of professorial and other chatterers, who, to hide their dearth of thoughts, turn out new words, discover in our days a particular “charm” in painting as in other arts, and prove by  $a+b$  the necessary, logically offered expression of new spiritual needs of the present generation.

Now what has become of the “charm” that calculatingly demanded “free light” and nothing else? And how is it, then, with the spiritual needs of the present generation, to which free light and nothing else corresponded? And how does it stand with the new way, in which favoured artists have taught us to contemplate and to feel nature?

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Was the "charm" four or five years ago inclined to brilliancy, and is it changed during the night to an insatiable longing for gloom? Did white and violet correspond five years ago to the spiritual needs of the present generation, and does this generation now need black, brown, or olive-green tones? Have we just as quickly again unlearnt to contemplate and feel nature in sun-gold and violet, as favoured artists have taught us to do?

Living art goes her way according to her own laws and impulses, and leaves in the lurch the babbling empty heads, with their pretentious threshing of phrases, who tramp after her, expounding and talking wisely interpretations and clever chatter. Not by a particular "incentive" of the period, not from its alleged spiritual needs and currents of thought, are the changes of art creation to be explained, but solely by the psychology of the artists, by their very human, very weakly prosaic needs, by the material and moral conditions under which they are nowadays condemned to work.

The *salons*, the art exhibitions, are in our time the annual marts of success for painters. In these they have to seek fame and its train-bearer—payment in cash. In these they must strive amongst a thousand or two thousand competitors to astonish at any price. By special beauty or special nobility? This means will be chosen by the very fewest. Firstly, not one in a thousand has it in his power. In the second place, even an artist not in the front

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rank has enough Philistine contempt to be convinced that nobility and beauty are the last things for which the crowd has a taste. His hunger for success — a fitting form of his instinct for self-preservation — gives the artist sense and understanding of the psychology of the multitude, whose elementary law is that it is obtuse to that which is common and reacts on what is uncommon. The artist who works with an eye to exhibiting where his work will be one of two thousand, has only one endeavour, viz., to be as different as possible from these, and by this means possibly to make a striking impression amongst them. The contrary is the greatest difference possible. That is the polar line, the angle of 180 degrees. Logic, which unconsciously proceeds geometrically, brings the artist to this. He also looks sharply at what the others are doing; puts himself to trouble to find out what they have in common, and in what respect they resemble each other; and when he has discovered this, or thinks he has done so, he proceeds to do the exact reverse.

If he has properly recognised the predominating element and has hit the exact opposite, the victory is gained with a weight that overthrows all before it. Professional associates, critics, and public stand in front of something new. The novelty-hating majority feels the disturbance in their lazy mental habits as an insult and discomfort, and sets up a yell. The minority of unsatisfied gainsayers,

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morbid bread-hunters, vain coxcombs, and enthusiasts longing for the glorious Unknown and Unprecedented, passionately take side for the novelty. This serves as an excuse for a conflict of those eternal conservative and radical tendencies, whose battle may be seen throughout the whole history of human development; and the artist who unchains these tempests sees himself honoured as one of the embodiments of contemporary thought, as a power in civilisation. Only quite exceptionally is a cool analyst found to say with smiling tranquillity amidst the bluster of the war of minds: "Dear children, don't excite yourselves like that; the word 'new' is no verdict. To be different does not necessarily mean to be better. An old tendency may contain beauty in itself; a new one may, of course, do so too, but not necessarily. He who grows excited on behalf of the old, simply because it is old, is commonplace. He who grows excited for the sake of something new, merely because it is new, is commonplace with a negative prefix. Only wait a little while. In a short space of time the new will have become old, and you will recognise that there was no grounds for raising a noise about it. The man of the new thing, whom you hail as the bringer of a new salvation, is no better than the ancients; but he is right, for he wishes to be noticed, to inherit from the ancients, and that is wholly justified from his selfish standpoint."

The would - be aristocrats of intelligence — the

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"intellectuals"—would find a speech like this intolerably homely. It is not in the least "deep." It is not at all applicable to the mystic inclinations of vaporous brains. It discovers no single unsurmised and astounding relation between phenomena that have nothing in common with each other; but I believe it is literally true.

The "Impressionists" of the Caillebotte room in the Luxembourg painted brightly when the *salon* was correspondingly dark. The one light picture among the dark paintings acted like a window that opens in the gloomy wall to the sunny air. When the other painters saw that the multitude flew towards this bright point, like moths after the flame of a taper, they hastened to paint also in bright colours. "Free light" was discovered. It corresponded to no mood of the period. Free light is joyous and satisfied. The spirit of the age was, during its predominance in painting, pessimistic and sick with longing as it had hardly ever been in the past. Nor was it a new way of seeing and feeling nature. Turner, Corot, Claude Lorrain, Ostade, Salvator Rosa himself had seen and felt nature quite as brightly as Manet and Monet had done. The truth is that the "Impressionists" were turbulent young people who got angry at vegetating in obscurity whilst Gudin and Schnetz, Signol and Müller, Pils, Cabanel, Dubufe, and Robert Fleury had all the honours and successes; and that impelled by envious loathing of these celebrities of that day, they found,

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as it were, in a negative chemo-tropical way, the exact reverse of their dark style.

Five years ago the same incident was played off exactly in the opposite direction. Everybody was painting in a bright style. The Schnetz and Cabanel, Delaunay and Cogniet of the day were called Puvis de Chavannes and Roll, Besnard and Cazin. Then, again, some young people got angry about their being unknown and unheeded, and they entered, consciously and of set purpose, into opposition against the celebrities of the day. Charles Cottet exhibited a black picture which, in the middle of a blinding white exhibition wall, struck just as glaringly as did, thirty years ago, the bright picture in the middle of the black wall. Cottet had hit the bull's eye. He instantly created a school, and to-day the *salons* look once more as they did thirty years ago, to be once more flooded with free light, probably, some twenty or thirty years hence. It is an orbit without beginning or end, an eternal beginning over again, and only posing fools seek, in this monotonous, periodical return of the same effects under the influence of the same causes, to ferret out connections with definite phenomena of the times.

Charles Cottet is developing into the undisputed leader of the young race of painters. He deserves the recognition accorded to him, yet it is a serious matter that he provokes to imitation; for what in him is uncouth, though justifiable, independence,

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will become with the imitators a manner that may rapidly pass into intolerable aberration. Cottet loves dark harmonies of colour. He paints night, closed rooms illumined by artificial light, candle and fire effects; unlike Rembrandt, whose glooms are delicate and transparent, whose men and things are particularly self-luminous in sunless space; and unlike his pupil, Schalcken, who treats flames and their reflections roughly after the manner of a blacksmith, without mystery or harmony. Cottet paints it apparently more from joy in darkness than joy in light, for with him darkness is generally the principal thing, and the sources of light are there chiefly to call attention to the sinister stir and movement in the unillumined dusk. His imitators do not see the intense life of his shadows. They only see his black, brown, and dark-green palette, and dimly brush away at it again as in the worst days before the dawn of "free light."

Painting goes out into the night, and will remain there a while. Then once more a cheerful and free artist will come, and discover light for an astonished and enraptured world, and he will be deified or damned as a revolutionist just as Monet was thirty-five years ago when he did the same, and as Cottet was five years ago when he did the reverse. And thus it will ever be so long as in the human apparatus of thought a change of impression will relax conscious feeling, and art creation will have to serve, not only the utterance of strong impulses

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of emotion and the relaxation of the nervous system, but also the ambition or vanity of the artist, which means, I suppose, to the end of time.

Cottet's execution is somewhat brutal. He works in the style of Ribot, who was himself a curious mixture of reminiscences of Franz Hals, Ribera, and Velasquez, with an admixture of personal self-will. He lays great, dark, almost dirty spots on the canvas, and treats human skin with boorish coarseness—I might almost say, with the curry-comb. But what truth and energy in all the movements! How economically and yet how exhaustively he can reveal the thoughts and feelings of his subject. There is little in the whole of modern painting so pathetic as his three-panelled picture, "Sea Folk," that now adorns the Luxembourg Museum. In the middle, the parting meal of the Jack Tars before starting, round the village table fifteen people, strapping young men with their womenfolk—mothers, wives, and sweethearts. Through the open window dark-green night looks in; from the petroleum lamp there gleams a sharp streak of yellow light; the men sit close to each other in silence; forebodings and the sadness of leave-taking exalt them and raise the souls of these horny-handed toilers to the regions of poetic thought and dreams. On the right, the boat that is conveying the sailors to their ship; some are rowing or steering, the rest are in a reverie. All go carelessly to meet their fate, which perhaps will mean merely prosaic seaman's work on a voyage

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without any adventures, but perhaps even heroic tragedies of struggle and destruction. On the left, the women remaining behind, who watch from the shore the departing men, their lovers, their bread-winners, with sorrowful love and prayer in their looks, their mien, their hands, and their attitudes.

Possibly this profound picture moves me so much only because it illustrates completely what I meant when I described the social mission of art in the future in these words: "In a work of art which is to attract the people, the people must find themselves again, but just as formerly the priest and king did: magnified and ennobled. The work of art must show them their own likeness, though a beautified one. It must raise the people in their own eyes, teach them to respect themselves. . . . Works which can show the dignity and beauty of the occupations of the multitude, which are a sanctification of labour, an apotheosis of the tragedies and idyls, of all the sweet and bitter stirrings of emotion in the common life—these works, I believe, constitute the type of the art work of the future."

Cottet's triptych is one of these works. It renders my abstract deductions concrete. He is a great painter who can extract with so sure a hand from the stone of everyday life all the gold of beauty it contains.

Cottet gets his suggestions for the most part from Brittany. Almost all his works, in any case his most famous ones, tell of Breton nature and the life of the Breton people. His "Midsummer Fire" is

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very affecting. The holiday fire is kindled beneath the clear sky of a midsummer night; around it assemble the Bretons, ever faithful to their traditions. The smoke ascends vertically; the flames glow on the countenances gazing on them. Old women and children they are, for the most part, who celebrate the solstice according to ancient custom; there are hardly one or two men among the devout multitude. The sterner sex, the middle-aged, laugh at the superstition; but the grandmothers foster the custom of their ancestors, and entwine it into the earliest childhood of their grandchildren as a dear remembrance that grows up with all the joys and sorrows of their infant years. Thus what is old is retained and is handed down from generation to generation. Cottet has expressively illustrated this rule of folklore, not because he intended it, but because he was true. Far and wide, as far as the eye can reach, other fires are burning, and mirroring themselves in the sea, and you can guess that, even around the furthest, which are hardly visible in the night, the villagers are making a circle, just as round the flame in the foreground. One single note hovers over the whole of this landscape; one single feeling dominates the soul of all this population. Each one of these old women whose glances are submerged in the holy flame feels herself at this instant a unit of the whole race inhabiting the hereditary granite soil, and part and parcel of her forefathers who have long rested beneath the sod.

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Thus a real work of art, without straying into literature, points far beyond its own boundaries.

The "National Fête at Camaret" is celebrated so earnestly by the Breton peasants that, in spite of the bright paper lamps on the tree, it has the effect of a church solemnity. In "The Old Breton Nag," Cottet has translated from bronze into less severe painting one of the never-to-be-forgotten coal-mine horses of Constantin Meunier. "Mourning by the Sea" is one of his masterpieces. Grandmother, mother, and daughter are sitting together on a stone bench on the shore. They are all three wearing widow's weeds. They are speechless and motionless, abandoned to their thoughts, which abide with their dead. The sea, which has swallowed their husbands, and to which they turn their backs, lurks behind them in insidious calm behind two storms that depopulate the coast, and leave behind the granite cliffs only old and young widows and children, who, in turn, also will be trained for the sea—the merciless sea, on which the poor devoted fishermen and sailors seek their living and find their death. The existence of a population, its truceless fight with hostile nature, is comprised in the black figures of these three modern Niobes. To-day, too, as in its beginnings, true art is myth-making.

To this series of pictures from Breton peasant life belongs also an "Early Mass in Winter," which at present hangs in the "Little Palace," at Paris. In the early dawn, beneath heavy clouds, a few Breton

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peasant women, of whom we get a back view, are proceeding across the flat, damp heath to an insignificant village church. They wear the round mantle with a hood, which is usual in that country. On first glancing at these short, broad, black figures without human form, which look like wobbling, tightly-filled coal-sacks, I could not help laughing aloud. But I observed in the mien of other observers composedness, piety, and admiration. These evidently saw in the picture only the walk to church, not the clumsy sacks, always a proof how powerfully Cottet can conjure up a mood.

Once or twice Cottet has in some measure proved faithless to his usual dark style of painting, and allowed himself to revel in colour. Thus in his portrayal of a family of Breton fisherfolk, when the corpse of a baby is laid on its bier. The dead child lies in its little open coffin, around which four tapers are burning. On both sides of the bier the seven or eight relatives stand grouped: the parents, aunts, little brothers and sisters express, each in his or her way, their grief, which, in the case of the still unconscious children only, sinks to the level of mere curiosity. From the coffin proceed two vividly red ribbons which stream across the bier down to the ground. Flowers of a similar furious red are strewn over the bier. These shrill values do not produce exactly a fine and harmonious effect in the dark-toned general atmosphere with the opposite warm yellow spots of the taper-flames. Moreover, the

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composition here is also not a happy one. It is an error to make the pale little corpse of the child the centre of a large picture. Death does not attract the eyes, but repels them. It does not endure the rivalry of life unless it can compel attention perhaps by means of special melodramatic circumstances or symbolical value. The glance turns naturally to the living, feeling, acting human beings, and thus the centre of the picture, which should be the keystone of the arch that holds the composition together, seems to be a gap. Christ's dead body may be made the centre of a picture. This dead Saviour will always be, in the beholder's imagination, the most living, the only living thing in the picture. So, too, the dead Lazarus and Jairus's little daughter are suitable for the main figures in a composition, because these dead persons are virtually living, and what makes them interesting is not death, but returning life. But the innumerable "Lessons in Anatomy," which were a favourite subject with the Dutch painters (Aart Pietersen, M. van Mirevelt, Rembrandt, Adrian Backer, Van Neck, Cornelis Troost, etc.) show how unsuitable a corpse, to which no suggestions beyond its visible condition are united, is for arresting the attention. Even a master such as Rembrandt is unable, in what is, I suppose, the most famous of all "Lessons in Anatomy," to direct attention to the dead body. In spite of the large space occupied by the corpse, we do not see it, but only Dr Tulp and his audience. Cottet's

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picture is the most convincing proof of the impossibility, in a composition containing living persons also, of laying the chief stress on a dead one. The psychic element, *i.e.*, the mourners' pain, Cottet has, however, expressed with gripping force and truth. It is his strength and glory that the inward, emotional life preponderates with him so far beyond all externals.

At the first glance his "Breton Festival" is even more repellent than the "Dead Baby." The line of hills on the horizon, the stern heath, the church, the breakfast laid on the white tablecloth in the foreground, are certainly masterly achievements; but the Breton women grouped in the open air round this still life wound us with their silk bodices of the crudest blue, green, and violet! It is said that Breton women actually dress in such shrill colours. This may be so; but that does not really justify the crude reproduction of such brutalities. It is asserted that time will subdue the overloud tones of these violent colours and effect a reconciliation of them. On this subject our children or grandchildren will have an opinion. What we see now is, anyhow, unpleasant. Has Cottet wished to show that he is able to deal with something besides asphalt and umber? If so, let him be told that his dark harmonies of brown, grey, and black are more agreeable than all these shrill penny-trumpet tones.

Cottet stands at the zenith of his life and artistic

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capacity. It would be rash to predict his further development. Whether he keeps to the dark style of painting, to which he owes his reputation, or lets himself be led away by the strong, bright, full colours; whether he remains faithful to Brittany, which seems with the young race of artists to take the place of the classic Italy of their predecessors, or seeks another soil and another landscape to serve as frames for his men and women of deep emotions —in any case, Cottet has already secured himself a place in the History of Art; deservedly, too, but chiefly because the change in the valuation of tones is bound up with his name. It was day; it became night. Manet and Monet had denoted dawn; Cottet introduced evening twilight.

## XII

### PHYSIOGNOMIES IN PAINTING

JOHN W. ALEXANDER, an American, possesses an enviable skill and certainty. He is master of the means of expression belonging to his art, and has a trustworthy feeling for the harmony of those light, subdued colours called in France "Liberty" shades, after the name of an American tradesman in the Avenue de l'Opera who first brought into vogue clothing, furniture, and wall stuffs in such peculiarly anaemic and almost chlorotic colours. With his dexterous draughtsmanship and charming harmony of cool, diluted blue, soft green, faint pale yellow and delicate rose, he might possibly have pleased connoisseurs, but could hardly have attained world-wide fame. He, therefore, hit upon painting women's portraits in amazing positions. He was the inventor of acrobatics in portraiture. His women lie about, in orgiastic contortions, on the ground or on sofas, with their legs up and heads hanging over the edge, or with forms twisted twice round, like a screw, or curled round like a sleeping dog, astonishing the inoffensive spectator,

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and suggesting to him of corrupt imagination certain lustful ideas. The means were effectual. Alexander became a first-class firm, and the *crétins* of criticism did not fail to praise his special knowledge of, and feeling for, the "modern women of high-strung nerves and Satanic caprices." Now Alexander seems to find that he has acquired sufficient fame, and is abandoning his follies. Among his later pictures there very rarely occurs one of which the model betrays his earlier leaning to gymnastics. The ladies he now paints are quite decent in their attitudes, and only, perhaps, a serpentine movement in their long, flowing garments reminds us still of the old gutta-percha or snakelike contortions of his bodies. Alexander has slipped through the fingers of his modernistic critics. Whilst they still keep on raving about his "modern women with high-strung nerves and Satanic caprices," he is painting prosperously, peacefully, and intelligently, and can now be recommended to the most respectable *bourgeois* families to immortalise their matrons.

AMAN-JEAN is a melancholy painter, whose palette has been tuned in a minor key. He is the guitarist of the falling leaf, twilight, tapestry-hung ancestral halls, sombre Gobelins. His pictures result from the mood in which a man catches himself humming the *King of Thule*. I do not say that this tone of colour does not possess its charm. He who does not live his life like a thoughtless, devouring,

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and digesting animal has, I suppose, on every blessed day of his existence, an hour in which he finds his own soul in the subdued and faded palette of Aman-Jean. It is, however, morbid to see the phenomena of the universe merely as old Gobelins in the hue of twilight hours. And morbid, too, is the way in which Aman-Jean transforms his impressions of poems into a painter's view. I know, for instance, a "Beatrice" of his which affords the maximum of involuntary comicality. Before an artificial-looking orange-tree, which she overowers in height, Dante's beloved, with the upper part of her body thrown back, and her stomach pushed forward, performs a sort of *danse du ventre*. To her girdle she has a golden laurel garland hanging, which, as a note of illumination in the dull night-hues, has an excellent effect as *valeur* (as the French say), but as an object or requisite is very comic. Aman-Jean himself, with that misappreciation of subordination in his pictures, which is so common among artists, lays far greater value on such ridiculous whims than on his portraits. And yet it is only in these that he shows with what sureness and intensity he is able to seize and lay bare the most inaccessible and most mysteriously elusive thing that reality has to exhibit, viz., living man. His "Jules Caze" and his "Dampt the Sculptor" belong to the most delicate portrayals of men, just as his "Paul Verlaine" and "Madame Henri Martin" must also remain unforgettable by every one who has beheld them.

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His portraits, to be sure, are not by any means of the same value. There is, for instance, a portrait by him of a "Cossack Colonel" that must fully mislead in regard to him. Materiality is entirely lacking in the full-length figure he has painted of the Russian officer; it is clapped flat on the canvas like a pancake. A laurel bush climbs from the bottom to the top of the picture — one cannot say in the background, as the picture has no depth, but, apparently, behind the man. The shrub seems painted on the wall to the height of the head. It suddenly grows plastic before our eyes, and shoots its leaves in front of the colonel's nose and forehead. By this symbolism which scoffs at all the laws of perspective, the painter evidently wants to suggest relations between the warrior and fame. One can only shrug one's shoulders at such puerility.

He is more and more breaking himself of the habit of regarding living models, and allows himself to be hypnotised by the Prae-Raphaelite magic lantern. We might wish for an Orpheus to take this noble artist by the hand and lead him back to the light from the shades in which he has lost himself. Perhaps the adventure would be more successful than in the case of Eurydice.

ALBERT BESNARD.—Contemporary painting knows no more harsh contrasts than Puvis de Chavannes and Albert Besnard. The former saw nothing in the world except spectres; the latter sees only fireworks. Puvis's eyes perceived no living colour; Besnard's

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eye is in a state as if it had received a violent blow from a fist, in consequence of which it saw the proverbial ten thousand candles. There is nothing objectionable about his delight in colour; on the contrary, any one who is not suffering from Daltonism would be delighted to be invited to his debauch of colours. If only Besnard only satisfied his taste in a somewhat nobler way! It pleases him to introduce his dazzling rockets into women's faces, and there no man of healthy taste will care to follow him. Besnard has marvellously beautiful yellow, orange, green, blue, and red on his palette. He can attune them, too, to a beautifully sounding harmony; but why must he put yellow on the cheeks, green on the hair, and blue and orange on the shoulders in his portraits? Why must he so portray his model as if it were streaked with luminous paint or bathed in a stream of light that has flowed through a coloured glass window? His mastery of drawing and modelling certainly makes his colouring-run-mad somewhat more endurable, but it does not justify his not searching for the tumult of colour which he loves in actual life (where, after all, he might with some effort find them), but chasing them into actual life without any regard or thought.

In the *salons* of late years, Albert Besnard pursues a curious policy. Near one or more aggressively stupid works, he exhibits a portrait or painting which is amazingly rational. In this there is method, unmistakably. It is a sort of self-defence. Besnard

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seems, from his canvasses, to address the visitors to the "Salon" in these words: "You see that I am in private life quite a sane individual and correct painter, who is as much the master of his art as anybody in the world. The other rubbish is for the fools of modernism. For those I am bound at times to play the Jack Pudding, but you need not, however, worry yourself about that. Once, for instance, this painted plea was the life-sized portrait of Denys Cochin, the nationalist deputy for Paris—an excellent work, laborious, powerfully drawn, and irreproachable in colour, which reminds one of Herkomer's best style. His clownery, on the other hand, was a huge picture which Besnard calls "The Isle of the Blessed." A bushy shore in the foreground, then a wide expanse of water which looks partly like sand, partly like wine-soup, and only in the remotest degree like natural water. Finally, in the background, a flat shore with the outlines of a white town that stick, as if cut out of paper, on the blue horizon. Across the level sea where it is reddest, glides a skiff in which stands, in the attitude of the Saviour calming the tempest, an enigmatical figure in red, flowing garments, and with the countenance of an Indian chief, surrounded by a grass-green and wine-dreg-coloured woman and a monkey-like rower of sulphur-yellow hue. On the bank young maidens tarry for the new arrivals, their light raiment, blown bell-shaped by the breeze, reproducing a *motif* of Botticelli. Between the trees groups

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of bright-coloured figures are camped, and on the steps of a hill sit or lounge flute-playing fauns, one of whom has the typical head of a retired French colonel. The women in the skiff are distinguished by distorted, acrobatic attitudes, which no model could sustain for ten minutes without supports and props. On principle, no two figures are placed side by side without being clad in the most opposite colours in the spectrum. This arrangement of colours suggests the thought that none of the figures must move away from the side of the others, and none could step into another group, as otherwise the harmonies intended by Besnard would be destroyed. That seems boldly and freely fanciful, but is soberly and painfully subtilised. It is a mechanical game with contrasts of colours, devoid of purpose and even of the charm of any sense of colour. Albert Besnard has, in his later days, evidently discovered Böcklin, or even has only heard him extolled and wants now to make his own Böcklin. The fauns—up to their heads—the maidens on the shore, the blue sea, the white town in the distance, are descended in the direct line from the pictures of the Bâle master. But Besnard has imitated the details as any one may copy a writing which he cannot read. “The link of the spirit is all that it lacks.”

JEAN BOLDINI is one of the most remarkable painters of female portraits in our time. In these

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he makes himself most solicitous to unite together the screw lines of Alexander's demoniacs twisting in hysterical convulsions, and Zorn's bold, sun-beam dances. The faculty of tumult hardly any one among contemporaries possesses like this uncommonly skilful Italian. His pictures seem to fly up as from a bursting bomb. Every fibre in his women palpitates and throbs. One of his women sits half naked, just as if she had torn, in a rage, the clothes off her body, on a lion's skin, and he has made the head and skin of this common floor-rug bristle with such an expression of cruel savageness, that you jump back in terror from the expected spring of the bloodthirsty monster. Another woman wears on her arm and shoulders a feather boa with wonderful convolutions, which seems to rustle from her in excitement like an eagle. A third lady stands in a door frame—she seems to be about to spring forward with the leap of a tiger. She wears one of those very modern, low-cut evening dresses, which are fastened over the shoulders only by a tiny chain; her bust looks as if it were laid bare because her dress was torn from her body in a brutal struggle with a satyr. There is an atmosphere about this woman of all hysterical convulsions, St Vitus's dance, or defence with teeth and claws against lawless attempts. There is a story about sorcerers and witches who through a touch give another shape to men. This changing of skin is not practised only in fairy

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tales. Certain portrait painters also have it in their power. Old Cabanel transformed the rich, fat wives of wholesale merchants and owners of house property, whom he painted for 30,000 francs, into goddesses of the old Greek mythology. Boldini by a spell transforms the ladies who trust themselves to him into mænads, mad women, evil witches that ride of a night on broomsticks to their Sabbath. I do not believe that people pay him 30,000 francs for that ; but if a lady even disburses a centime to be represented by Boldini as a Bacchante or a Vampire, she must be as much a victim to neuroses as Boldini makes her out to be.

WILLIAM BOUGUEREAU.—The contempt of Bouguereau is the beginning of wisdom in art. That everybody knows who has occupied himself with contemporary painting otherwise than as a picture-dealer. Among the long-haired ones who dwell on the mountain land of Montmartre, no name conveys a worse insult. He who wants to make an impression on the Botticelli ladies when visiting the "Salon," must make a grimace of sudden, severe nausea when he comes across a painting by this "manufacturer of perfumery labels." On the other hand, Bouguereau has managed to collect in his head in a coronet of all sorts all the honours that blossom for an artist in France. He is Commander of the Legion of Honour and Member of the Institute ; he gained the *Prix de Rome*, and has pocketed all the

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medals that the Salons and Universal Exhibitions had to bestow. His works fetch the highest prices in the market, and if no Parisian artist finds purchasers, the big pork butcher of Chicago, that painters' Providence, to whom in their prayers they turn their countenances, always has gold for Bouguereau. The deplorable Philistine, who would also very much like to have a little share in the æsthetic enjoyments of this world, tears his hair and groans: "Where is truth?" The *Chat Noir* treats Bouguereau as a buffoon, but the Academy erects altars to him. Criticism scoffs, but America pays. And, however readily the Philistine yields to the appearance of daring modernity, if he listens to the voice of his own heart, he notices to his embarrassment that Bouguereau, as a matter of fact, pleases him. He gazes with secret delight at his "Cupid and Psyche," his "Pearl," and "Innocence," his "Oblation to Cupid," his "Wasps' Nest," his "Cupid *mouillé*," his "Holy Women at the Tomb." It is always the same: a sweet maiden, or even several, a well-built youth of rosy body and slender limbs, laughing little mouths with pearly teeth, blooming cheeks, snowy bosoms and rosy fingers—all lovely, all a delight to the eye. The Philistine wriggles under the decree of fashion, which forces him to find these charming things horrible, and his troubled look frames the question that his mouth dares not utter: "Why? Why?"

I think we are doing a good work when we answer him calmly and in a friendly manner, without

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exaggeration or cheap witticisms which neither explain nor prove anything, not even necessarily the sincerity of the witling. Bouguereau pleases the insufficiently trained eye, because he paints prettily; but in art prettiness is the direct opposite of the beautiful, for it is untruth, since a conscience originally delicate or happily trained only feels truth to be beautiful.

Prettiness is necessarily untruth, for it is that which is conceived without trouble, which excites no opposition, which compels no strain on the attention and no adaptation on the part of the spectator to the peculiarity of the artist. Its effect is merely the effect of what meets the spectator's pre-existent thoughts or feelings completely. This pre-existing element is not, however, the result of collective observation and strong feeling, but the dissipated precipitate of the most fugitive, indifferent perception, which is totally unfitted to obtrude into the world of phenomena.

The artist whose goal is prettiness, does not glance at reality, but at the soul of the crowd which he wishes to please. He does not portray what he sees, and what makes an impression on him, but what suits the feeble, inexact concepts which the average man forms of things. He is a courtier of the crowd; he flatters their shallowness and incapacity. He wants them to say, with a self-satisfied smile: "This man is a great artist, for he has the same way of looking at things as ourselves." Prettiness is, in lyric poetry, rhyming

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"love" with "dove," "heart" and "part"; in drama, it is rewarding the good characters with advantageous marriages and lucrative posts, and making the wicked fall into the pit they have dug for others. For this is just what the public expects; such is the world-picture which the world has arranged for itself, and it is grateful to the poet that he does not force it to rectify its comfortable way of thinking.

In the plastic arts prettiness is the average or typical. Bouguereau paints a pattern, not a person. He has a canon to which he holds; and if he would only go so far as to look at real human beings, and had to admit that nature does not act according to his canon, he would certainly say: "So much the worse for nature."

Superficiality always confuses prettiness with the ideal. One cannot fail to see that prettiness lacks exactness. This inexactness is, however, praised as an improvement on reality: the master of prettiness understands nature better than she understands herself. He guesses what she would, but cannot always, do, and comes with his superior creative power to help the poor incapable. The truth is that prettiness is the exact reverse of the ideal; for the ideal is the presentiment of future developments: prettiness the pompous repetition of what is commonplace. The idealist is impelled by a restless longing after novelty to represent; he seeks in invisible germs which the average soul does not perceive to detect the later glory of

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blossom. The painter of prettiness shows scant satisfaction in attainment, and his creation is nothing but a sleepy reminiscence of impressions he is accustomed to.

The chief harm done by prettiness in art is that it confirms the multitude in their dulness instead of arousing them from it. What the "man in the street" feels in presence of a work of Bouguereau's is self-complacent pleasure at the artist agreeing with him. He will expect the same feeling also from real works of art, and be disappointed if he fails to find it. Pretty paintings deaden the mind of the average man for powerful works, which teach men to see, educate eyes, operate for cataract, and heal colour-blindness, are keys to the hidden sense of lines of movement, interpret the symbolism of form, and point the way to unknown beauty. The bloodthirsty backwoodsman of Montmartre is, therefore, right to think little or nothing of Bouguereau, and to scalp him; and the Philistine who expects to elevate and enrich his mind by art must make the sacrifice of renouncing the cheap pleasure which the engaging banality of prettiness procures him.

If Bouguereau has anything personal to say, he can say it no worse than many another. His "Portrait of Himself" in the velvet painting-jacket is sincere, and at any rate strives to be honest. It is true that here, too, he has not been quite able to overcome his habit of embellishing, and his cheeks are distressingly rosy. One could

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not expect from him the almost terrifying inexorableness with which a David has confessed the dreadful grimace of his face paralysed on one side, and a Rembrandt, in his old age, the puffiness of his features and the wateriness of his eyes. These men had such a pride in truthfulness that, in their anxiety not to be partial, they felt almost hostile to themselves, and tried, and judged themselves accordingly. Bouguereau does not understand why he should treat himself more ill-temperedly than his Cupids and nymphs, and smiles good-humouredly at himself.

FRANK BRANGWYN.— This young Englishman, born in Belgium, is a painter of the great class from which the kings of art spring. In his delight in colour, he reminds us of Delacroix in his *Sturm und Drang* period ; in the dauntlessness with which he wields the brush, of Franz Hals himself, the boldest fighter with this weapon that ever lived up to now. His two first works exhibited in the Paris Salon, "A Sailor's Funeral" and "All Hands Aloft," instantly called attention to him. His "Buccaneers" was a veritable revelation. In a boat, floating on the blue-black tide of the Caribbean Sea, row some life-sized fellows clad in variegated material, their heads bound with bright red cloths. In the glowing, tropical sun that swelters down on them, everything is a blinding, bright flame : the foam, wet oars, the ship's planks, the clothing and headgear of the people. The brown cut-throats get

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in this noonday glory an almost superhuman relief, and in their savage countenances a calm consciousness of their formidableness is revealed, which even in the picture has the effect of a challenge to mortal combat. A year later he exhibited "Goatherds," likewise life-sized, and likewise plunged in the noonday glow of a southern sky, and, in addition, a reposefully coloured and marvellously deep night-piece, "The Three Holy Kings offering the Infant Jesus Gold, Incense, and Myrrh." His ability was further enhanced by a "Market on the Shore" and a "Miraculous Draught of Fishes."

The "Market on the Shore" is held in a Barbary harbour. Little bright-coloured carpets are spread on the yellow loamy sand, where negroes in brown and green-lined *haiks* and *burnooses* lie squatting. They are surrounded by poorer people in fantastic rags, with red *tarboosh* on long, clean-shaven Hamitic skulls. Beyond, three ships extend their prows over the flat beach, and in the background, on the further side of a strip of water, we get a glance, through a gateway with three pointed arches, at the dim throng of a mysterious Mohammedan town.

The "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" takes place in the evening. The fishing-boat rocks softly on the almost oil-smooth, dark blue mirror of the Lake of Genesareth, on the shallow valleys and crests of whose waves the setting sun's nearly horizontal beams strew leaves and strips of thin gold. Four fishermen are busy hauling in with powerful move-

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ments the net heavy with their catch. Behind their vessel, a green, flat-bottomed boat with sails, steered by a disciple, carries the Saviour, veiled in the gloaming, across the water.

Religious subjects have an especial attraction for Brangwyn. In his great picture, "The Scoffers," he shows a man with the bearded curly head of an enthusiast, fastened to a pillory. The scene, as is usual with Brangwyn, is an Eastern town. A crowd, which is amusing by its negro and Moorish types and their charming garments and rags, presses on the prisoner, who is wearing the strange garb of a Western artisan, and reviles him with the words from their mouths opened in sneering laughter; with the glances of their stupid, malicious eyes; with the gesture of their forked and pointed fingers. Pity is mingled with curiosity only in the case of a handsome, brown, young maiden in the foreground, who, with a noble water-pot on her head, evidently returning home from the spring, remains standing in order to gaze at the scene. You may understand the story as you please. Perhaps it is a foreign socialist or anarchist, who tried to preach his doctrines there, and to whom the authorities are giving short shrift, and whose only reward now is the mockery of the stupid crowd to whom he intended to bring a message of salvation. Perhaps the incident has a deeper and more solemn sense, and is the subjective, half-touched-up, half-modernised representation of the mocking of Christ when He

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was bound to the pillar in order to undergo flagellation. Whether the drama is conceived from a socio-logical or theological standpoint, it is of supreme power. The great pain of the altruist who sacrifices himself for mankind, and sees his sacrifice despised ; the great sin of the populace that is thoughtlessly guilty of the most horrible ingratitude, are strikingly expressed. And in what form is this rich spiritual and moral purport clothed ? Such repose and nobility in varied colour ; such witchery in the flat triad of dark yellow, reddish purple, and deep blue ; such amazing sureness in modelling by means of mere patches of colour without outlines, it has not been my lot to meet with twice in contemporary painting.

Neither must I leave his "St Simon Stylites" unnoticed. The saint is sitting, with his back resting against a pole, on the platform of his lofty pillar. On the other edge of the platform, ascending by a ladder, appears a priest in mass vestments, accompanied by a deacon, in order to administer Holy Communion to the Stylite, who is apparently dying. The story, however, is a matter of indifference. It is the wonderful harmony of colours that makes this picture so expressive. It is late in the day ; twilight is approaching ; the last ray of sunlight is finely sprinkled through the air around the figures above the roofs of the Syrian town, from which arises a transparent cloud, so thin that it is rather a breath, an exhalation, than a vapour, and is more surmised than seen. A flight of

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swallows glides past the saint, and the birds, with their arrow-swift and pleasing motions, observed in the precise Japanese way, greatly help to produce an impression of height and airiness, which Brangwyn attains chiefly by his art of distributing light, and his eerie perspective.

Brangwyn fixes in his pictures all the magic of noon and midnight. He shows his figures either flushed by the quivering heat of the full burning sun, or covered with a veil of half-transparent darkness. Both illuminations have the peculiarity of suppressing all subsidiary work and letting only what is essential remain. The face or body of a man steeped in sun rays becomes almost transparent. Behind the skin and the connecting tissues which we perceive only as a covering, the muscles and bones come forth. The intense brightness prepares a body almost as the dissecting knife of anatomy. Darkness has a similar effect; it blots out the connections and transitions, and only accentuates the strong lines of construction. Only diffused light gives an equal value to all the parts of a surface; it shows all and explains nothing. Direct light, on the other hand, just like darkness, graduates phenomena, makes us recognise at the first glance what is external ornamentation and what are the supports and timber.

Brangwyn is an impressionist in the best sense of the word, a perfect representative of what Impressionism contains that is justifiable. He does not

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stop over trivialities and accessories. He sees only the essential in phenomena, but this he sees with infallible certainty and intensity. A feature which marks exhaustively the direction, purpose, and force of a movement; a spot of colour that challenges and fixes the eye, as a sudden stroke of a bell does the ear—these are the optical elements which he grasps, and with delightful simplicity, weight, and carelessness, and, as it were, in student fashion, throws on the canvas “straight from the wrist.” The spectator finds once more in the picture exactly the component parts of the phenomenon which in the actual thing would alone excite and fix his attention, and, corresponding to his psychological habit, he supplements the indications of the painting by pictures from his own memory, till it becomes a perfect copy of the real thing, which then includes also all the subsidiary matters either merely hinted at, or quite passed over by the painter.

Brangwyn is one of those rare gifted *virtuosi* who does not need to draw. The line does not subsist for him, just as it does not subsist in nature. He models with light and colour. He puts spots irregularly near one another, little and big, long and short, angular and round, bright and dark, white and coloured; and from these spots, from this mosaic of correctly-felt effects of light, he builds up the phenomenon in space with incomparably genuine and intense corporeality. Our judgment adds the lines which the painter has never drawn, as it does when looking at the actual thing. We have here

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the optical elements themselves, which are perceived by the retina of the eye as mere gradations of light, but are apprehended and interpreted by the higher centres as coloured and plastic phenomena. Such a way of painting demands infallible certainty of sight and trustworthy obedience of the hand, else it leads to bankruptcy in art.

PAUL CÉZANNE.—He was one of the protagonists and pioneers of Naturalism. He was with Claude Monet, Caillebotte, and the other Impressionists an interesting subverter; with Zola he was for a moment a victor, and is now vanquished, although, probably, he will not admit it. A barefooted Masaniello, whom a successful revolution of the rabble carries to the top and lodges in the king's palace, but who has very soon to exchange his purple mantle for his hereditary rags. Fortunately, the lot of overthrown art-revolutionaries is not so horrible as Masaniello's; they do not end under the executioner's hand.

Cézanne has one thing in his favour which pre-possesses us for him, *i.e.*, his uprightness. It is his nature that ugliness has for him an attraction. He sees only what is abnormal, unpleasant, and repulsive in actual life. If he paints a house, it must be warped, and threaten to tumble down soon. If he portrays a human being, the latter has a distorted face, apparently paralysed on one side, and a deeply depressed or stupid expression. Every model that

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submits himself to him is put in some sort of convict's dress. Here is a female portrait. A withered, dried-up face, mud-bedaubed clothes that look as if they had been trailed through the gutter. Doubtless a "professional" who at a raid was accommodated in "Black Maria," and, after a night in the cells of the police station, discharged? Nothing of the sort. She is a respectable lady of the upper middle-class. This man with the trouble-distorted countenance and the greasy felt hat and overcoat is perhaps a starveling from Bohemia, a broken-down creature, ruined artist or writer? Most certainly not. He is a well-to-do person of independent means. It is curious to me how any one can allow himself of his own accord to be painted by Cézanne, unless it were done in a contrite, penitential mood as a penance. To be sure, one cannot be angry with him, for he does not treat himself any better than his other victims. He has painted portraits of himself which would be grossly libellous if another had painted them. In truth he is not vain, for he sees himself as he represents himself in these pictures. And his morose eye disfigures not only faces, heads, and raiment, but also the rest. Heine assures us that "A woman's body is a poem." He would not dare to sustain this statement if he were to see Cézanne's "Three Naked Women before the Bath." Such nudities are really immoral, and shriek, not for a discreet fig-leaf, but for a nine-fold covering of cloth and fur.

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BLAISE DESGOFFES.—This painter, who died in 1902, was an incomparable copier of still life; for indeed there exists a still and secret life in the productions of the artist's hand, as an eye lovingly steeped in form and beauty of colour sees them. Desgoffes was great in little pictures, which rendered splendid things of gold and enamel, of rock crystal, jasper and chalcedony, trinkets and precious stones, lace and embroidery on velvet and silk, carved and polished ebony in unsurpassable perfection. There is a school which very contemptuously calls these pictures *bodegones*. That is the disdainful Spanish expression both for a cookshop and for daubed representations of vulgar eatables such as sausages, smoked herrings, and cheese made from whey. Copying the productions of human hands should be unworthy of an artist. Only what is living, nay, only human life, should be justifiable. But that is too narrow a conception. Certainly the highest mission of all human art is the portrayal of men and women; and what is not itself human becomes artistic in proportion as it gains relation to humanity by means of secret anthropomorphic animation and spiritualisation. But he who demands harshly and dogmatically that the human figure should be treated to the exclusion of everything else, relegates a Hondekoeter, a Landseer, a Rosa Bonheur to the second class, and denies a Desgoffes the title of artist, which is sheer nonsense. I do not know if there is a precedence in art, or any other precedence

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than that of the ability to express and transmit the life of emotion. Anyhow, a man stands very high who understood how to translate into painting the optical peculiarities of choice woods, metals, stones, and textures better than any painter before him.

LÉON FRÉDÉRIC amazes like an anachronism; in him lives the soul of a primitive. Thus the Van Eycks, Roger van der Weydens, and Hans Memlings regarded the world and man. That is, however, not a sort of affected, antique skill, as in the English Præ-Raphaelites, and their Continental imitators, but genuine, unconscious atavism, the purity of which is evident from the fact that Frédéric paints no masquerades, but only nude, human limbs, or contemporary types of the people in the miserable working garb of our days. If they appear like figures out of mediæval ballads or folk-stories, it is because Frédéric feels them so. He is an out and out Fleming: mystical like his countrymen Ruysbroek, Suyskens, etc.; and, besides, delighting in form, like the builders of the Belgian cathedrals and guildhalls; in love with life, like the feasters and dancers of the Flemish kermesses; honest and conscientious in his work, like an old guild-master of the time of the Spanish Netherlands; brooding and earnest, like a Beguine or a Lollard.

Frédéric does not actually copy, but he is curiously vivid in his recollection of what he has seen. The

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old Low-German and Flemish masters, whose outlook on the world he shares, hover before him. From the Low-German artists he has his *naïve*, brick-red flesh tone and the painfully conscientious kind of workmanship, which neglects no wrinkle in the skin or curl in the hair; from Memling, his loving accuracy in treating all accessory work — flowers, ground, clothes, and utensils. Sprinkling the whole canvas with equally finished details, chiefly luxuriant plants, is common to Frédéric and all the Præ-Raphaelites. The pictures of this school, even if they take their subjects chiefly from the fourth dimension, are optically of two dimensions. They are only surfaces. They do not understand perspective, and, therefore, cannot shade off a middle distance or background. Everything lies in one and the same plane and is treated with the same clearness and precision. In the accuracy with which they render every little stone, every texture, and plant, the Præ-Raphaelites have no equals. If, in addition to this, they could paint human beings also, they would deserve unstinted praise, at any rate, as draughtsmen, if not as colourists.

Frédéric feels the sacredness of his art profoundly, as do few other painters of the present day. He seems to himself a priest. It is an external, but a characteristic one: he paints hardly anything but triptychs, which he regards, to a certain extent, as altar-pieces of a philosophical religion; and what he portrays is always a sort of pathetic symbol, from

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which there comes a sound like verses from the Bible or Vedic hymns. His symbols are not always clear, but it is not his fault that painting is not a fit expression of brief syntheses of long trains of thought, or ethical and philosophical abstractions. At most it is his fault that he does not feel this. His triptych, the "Golden Age," is, for instance, a view such as Ovid might have described if he had lived in a Belgian district among Flemish people. Frédéric relates the history of one day of his happy race: how human creatures of all gradations of age sleep peacefully in the gleaming night, clinging to one another; how they are awakened by rosy dawn and refresh themselves in a crystal brook; how, beneath a noonday sun, they play and dance and shout for joy, pluck blossoms and fruits, and sit before dainty dishes. It is a profusion of magnificently modelled nude women who are all very red of skin; a laughing exuberance of life such as an old-time worshipper of the obscene god of fruitfulness might have dreamt of amidst the reek of sacrifice. It is also a funnily cannibalistic debauch of delicious children's flesh and blooming, well-nourished bodies. In other pictures Frédéric has occasionally tortured us by quite as perfectly painted, but, on account of their inexorable truth, fearfully painful representations of radiant nudities torn by thorns, and whole heaps of children's corpses. Here, however, he is all joy and peace, and his picture is a delight to the eye.

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In another of Frédéric's triptychs, "The Ages of the Workman," we can measure the whole emptiness of such concepts as "Realism" and "Idealism." Compare Frédéric with the Bastien Lepage of the Luxembourg. Bastien Lepage passes for the most perfect didactic type of realistic painting. His brutalised, ape-like, feeble-minded, staring Reaper is supposed to be genuine, unrouged nature. Possibly the painter has, on some occasion, seen a disgusting idiot of this sort. I do not know, but I will believe it, for I should like to assume that he had not discovered in his own imagination so perversely distorted an image of the human form. But as such repulsively bestial young women are, in any case, rare exceptions among the white races, Bastien Lepage has unmistakably taken the trouble to choose out of thousands the most hideous model he could hunt up, out of a base, corrupt delight in ugliness, with the malicious intention of defaming nature. Frédéric tells a story in his triptych, "The Ages of the Workman." Who can deny that he, too, has held with absolute accuracy to reality? On the right, early childhood: workmen's wives, young and fair mothers are suckling their babies, sweet, fat little creatures with firm little limbs and skins like rose leaves; little maidens, who can hardly stand on their feet, take in tow and act the mother to still smaller brothers and sisters; old grandmothers, who can no longer take part in the labours of the household, keep an eye on the children

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crawling and swarming about. In the middle, youth : neglected yet happy scapegraces are playing cards in the street, sitting or squatting on the curb-stone ; undisciplined lads are venturing the experiment of their first cigarette ; grown-up youths go out with young girls of their class on their arm ; what they whisper in the ears of their blushing sweethearts would scarcely delight severe guardians of morals ; but, at that period of life, in that human environment, their feelings are so natural and healthy that, in spite of all crabbed affectation, they are felt to be pleasant and touching. Finally, on the left, men in their prime are at work: they are erecting toilsomely, with heavy pieces, a scaffold, and a little youngster looks at them ; what he has before his eyes is his own future lot, but in his careless, boyish curiosity he notices only the amusing side of the growth of a skilful and intricate work of man, not the hard seriousness of the ill-paid, dangerous, and severe exertion. Thus the life of the poor artisan lies exposed to our gaze. Frédéric does not conceal from us either its hardships or the scantiness of its material condition. He shows us how poorly the people are clad, how ugly their streets and houses are, how narrow is the circle that includes their petty joys and sorrows, and how serious, now and then, is their pastime. But he makes us see also the sunshine resting golden over their years of childhood and youth, and feel the satisfactions with which their families also animate and delight their monotonous

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existence. He brings these poor, humble people humanly near us, and gives us a great lesson in brotherhood. Every feature in his picture is true; but from this truth a noble and consoling thought proceeds, revealing to us its full extent of beauty and moral motives. Frédéric is a Realist quite as much as Bastien Lepage, so far as he deals with the painfully exact reproduction of sights he has actually observed. But in Frédéric's presentment the commonplace appears ennobled, and that a superficial æstheticism dubs Idealism. The fact of the matter is that the words Realism and Idealism mean simply nothing. There is no art, there is no artistic tendency, which could be so designated. There are only artists' temperaments, which are themselves biliary, and, for that reason, dwell with malicious joy on the unpleasant sides of reality, and others which delight in all that is bright, and have a presentiment of a deeper redeeming meaning even behind the unpleasing external. The Realism of a Bastien Lepage is calumny; that of a Frédéric, a speech for the defence.

JEAN PAUL LAURENS has reached all the heights of artistic success. He is a professor, an Academician, and he receives the most honourable commissions from the State and great cities. He has been graciously permitted to satisfy his ambition as a monumental painter with enormous wall- and ceiling-paintings, like those of the Capitol of Toulouse.

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He was often more happy, often less happy, always powerful, always pathetic, now and then, I will admit, declamatory. But he has also once forsaken his visions of history and turned a glance at the present; and what he saw there, he fixed in a great painting which he calls "Mining Folk," which stands above all his far-famed frescoes.

It is evening. Between a high, steep-sloping heap of coal and slack and a low line of distant hills closing the horizon, a big town is painted in a wide trough of country. Over the crowded roofs of this town numerous chimneys rise up. No church towers or palace gables, only chimneys which belch aggressively, one might say, white vapour or dense black smoke in the face of the twilight sky. From the middle distance a procession of weary, toil-worn men, whose legs drag and heads hang down, is moving forward along a causeway. From the depths on both sides of the causeway ascend clouds of sulphurous yellow and blue smoke.

Any one engrossed in the details may see how the workmen wandering homewards are clad in the garb of the modern proletariat, and how a manufacturing town of the present day with typical factory buildings lies stretched before us. But the first rapid, comprehensive glance conveys quite a different impression. The town looks like a Sodom and Gomorrha in rebellion against God, and is on the point of being chastised by fire from heaven. The procession of men appears to be a band of the

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damned which a hidden, mysterious abyss of hell, behind the bend in the road, has vomited. Near the causeway, uncanny depths seem to yawn, from which tongues of hell-flames leap up. It is a prophet's vision, and the atmosphere of a saga. You fancy you have an illustration of the Inferno before you, but also a note from the formula according to which the painters and sculptors of the Middle Ages were wont to depict the Last Judgment.

And the most remarkable thing is that this epic extension and enhancement of so banal an incident as the exodus of a shift of pitmen knocking off their work is by no means intended. The painter nowhere consciously works with a view to melodrama. He keeps, in all details, strictly to facts. It is only his perception that has made a canto of Dante out of a true copy of an everyday incident. At the sight of the flaming forges, smoking chimneys, and exhausted slaves working for hire, there came to him an inkling of the mighty forces of nature and society which are at work in the man- and horse-powers of a modern wholesale business, which fixed the choice and arrangement of elements in his picture, imprinted on it the demoniac feature, and rendered it a profound symbol of the history of a part of humanity.

JEF LEEMPOELS is one of the most interesting of contemporary Flemings in whom the exquisite artistic qualities of their mediæval forefathers and masters live again. Leempoels has the sturdy,

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homely truthfulness of these ancestors, their profound feeling, and speculative mind, which easily goes astray into the fantastic. He has their masterly draughtsmanship, and he only lacks their delight in colour and their gift of free, clear composition to rise entirely to their greatness.

He does not rely on his capability or right to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential. He does not dominate his subject with sovereignly subjective perception, but makes himself the humble slave of the phenomena and all their most capricious and lowest details. He does not span the world with the eye of a creative artist, but glances at it as though he were a photographic apparatus for taking authentic negatives. To this intellectual dependence is joined an insufficient development of the sense of what is picturesque. Leempoels is dry in his accuracy and sober in his colouring. He does not seem to think it is his vocation to harmonise tones and to please the eye by a well-arranged palette. And in spite of all this I can never forget his chief pictures. He revealed his nature in *naïve* little features. For instance, on the wall of the room where the father and mother, old and worn out by life, are sitting together, hang faded photographs representing them, as a young married couple, in a strikingly comic dress according to the latest fashion of five-and-twenty years ago, yet young and full of joyous hope. This discreet contrast, which must be sought for to be noticed, contains the whole

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melancholy poetry of their life from blooming youth to withered age. And the pictures of his sisters. The good girls are not particularly favoured by nature; they are true daughters of the homely Flemish race, in whom beauty is rare. When Leempoels painted them, there was a struggle in him between the conscientiousness of a sworn witness to reality and brotherly love; but the former gained the victory, and the latter was allowed to reveal itself only in the delicate, almost caressing, perfection of their hands, necks, hair, and clothes.

His picture "Friendship"—an old and somewhat younger man are sitting boldly before us, hand in hand, with their honest, ugly faces turned full towards us. They are figures from the people, the one wearing a green, the other a dark red knitted waistcoat. They are evidently neither rich nor educated, and no particularly developed intellectual life speaks from their clear, reposeful eyes, or their heavy, vulgar features. And yet they are noble creatures. It is their feeling which ennobles them. Only lofty souls are capable of such loyalty and attachment as these two workmen, who so affectionately clasp each other's hands and lean shoulder to shoulder—let come what come may!—and he who comprehends character without declamation says to himself involuntarily before this picture: "It is well for him who in his path through life meets with such friendship." Here Leempoels has performed the highest mission of the artist—he has recognised

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and indicated convincingly what is grand and beautiful in the insignificant and commonplace. That is healthy idealism, for which it is my pride to fight—a consoling and uplifting moral purport in an exact and true form.

I am less agreed in respect of another picture. Leempoels calls it "Fate and Humanity," and in this he has gone beyond his natural vocal register. From the lower rim of the picture there grows a marvellous flora of hands stretched forth on high, either folded in supplication or clenched in threatening fists, embracing many symbols of faith of various kinds, such as crosses, communion chalices, fetishes and offerings; over them appears, in violet light and filling two-thirds of the picture, a huge, bearded face that, indifferent and unmoved, gazes forward without noticing the hands of supplication and blasphemy raised towards it. It is plain enough what Leempoels wants to express; but it is not apparent what the effect will be of this violet face as inexorable destiny. Its feeble, vacant gaze and stiff nimbus infuse no particular horror, and nothing else which might be imposing is discernible in it. On the other hand, Leempoels imparts to the hands the full measure of his amazing capacity. These hundreds of hands, which are painted with a patience that is almost painful, have all their individual physiognomy. They are all individual hands of men and women, young and old, industrious and idle, Caucasian, Nubian, and Indian. The hands

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of all races, callings, ages and temperaments are so perfect in their characterisation that error is impossible. If among the hands were to be found those of a friend, I should certainly recognise them at the first glance. As a study of human hands, the piece is a museum-picture which has not its peer in all the collections with which I am acquainted. As a work of art it saddens through want of taste. Leempoels would sin against himself if he strayed into unlimited symbolism. His talent points him in the direction of the clearly circumscribed. He need not trouble himself about being implicated with Philistinism through his devotion to actuality. His sincerity of feeling, too, in the treatment of Philistine subjects, will always raise him above Philistinism.

HENRI MARTIN has always aimed at lofty ends, but the paths he has followed to gain them were crooked and wrong. He was, when he began, and still is, in moments of relapse, a dabbing stumper, *i.e.*, he laid on a thick dab of colour the size of a hazel-nut and extended it somewhat. With this method, his famous "Vibrations" was, indeed, successful, especially at a certain distance; but he broke up all form, and this allowed him to draw quite superficially. If any one reproached him with not rendering a single outline with exactness and certainty, he could use the excuse: "One cannot at the same time flood a picture with flickering light

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and model precisely." Stumping was with Martin as with his imitators the cloak to cover up artistically dishonest forms. His idealism—the main feature in his physiognomy as an artist—was revealed, in his first period chiefly, by his feeble figures being dressed in the garb peculiar to no time or country, the garb in which the Primitives were wont to make their angels appear, and by their moving in an artificial stage, which one can call neither earth, nor air, nor heaven; for, as a rule, it was painted a single iridescent, mixed colour, mostly a sort of pale lilac, into which some darker, smooth tree trunks, placed regularly like a lattice, were introduced.

Typical of his first period are his symbolical pictures "Towards the Abyss," and "Every One has his own Chimæra." We are almost ashamed to linger over describing this confused rubbish.

"Towards the Abyss."—A hussy unclad after the fashion in vogue at a Paris artists' pot-house—her cunning nudity is emphasised by ball-shoes, long black gloves, and by a black veil, thrown back at the right place, but transparent throughout—is hurrying down the gentle slope of a hill. Bats' wings wide outspread sprout from her shoulders. A crowd of people, in which men and women of all ages and ranks are mixed up, rush after her with the attitudes and gestures of epidemic madness. Some run, others drag themselves along on their knees, others, again, on all fours, after her, and scuffle for flowers which she strews in her wake. Every

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meaning can be imported into this picture, but nothing can be gleaned from it, or, at most, that the frenzied attitudes of the slaves and victims of this creature, wallowing in the dust, kissing and licking the hussy's footsteps, betray an unconscious masochistic trait in Henri Martin's soul.

"Every One has his own Chimæra" is even more futile than this perverse illustration of the pious admonition: "Keep from sin, for the lust of the flesh leads to destruction." A number of daubed, shadowy figures crawl painfully along in a clay-coloured mass; each is bent under a burden which represents in bodily form his ruling passion. Thus the sensualist carries a naked strumpet; the miser a sack full of gold; the ambitious man laurels and the spoils of war, etc.—a lamentable attempt to represent a literary commonplace in an artist's vision, in a living and concrete form.

Luckily, Henri Martin showed development. After his first period of crudely affected stippling and streaking, of bold neglect of drawing, amidst the shapeless daubing of coloured *confetti*, serpentines, and pompositis, with a would-be profound yet absolutely vacant symbolism, he returned to nature and life, treated warmly human subjects from an ideal standpoint, and toned down the crudeness of his execution without, I admit, giving it up altogether.

Commissioned by a rich banker, he painted for the Marseilles Savings Bank a monumental triptych

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which he called “Labour.” He assigns views of Marseilles—certainly treated with great freedom—to the three backgrounds. The manifest meaning of the three panels is morning, noon, and evening. In the first panel, the children are on their way to school, reading their books; the women are going to market, the labourers to their place of work. In the second, dockers, under the glowing sun of Provence, are unloading a ship’s cargo, which consists of baskets full of golden oranges. In the third, the waterside is almost deserted; an old couple, with a child carrying a doll in its arm walking in front of them, stroll in the cool of the day; some artisan families are also enjoying some fresh air after leaving off work, and

*Jam majores cadunt altis a montibus umbrae.*

But the times of day are, as I have said, only the plain meaning of the picture. Beside or behind it, it has also a deeper, veiled meaning. It would illustrate also an actual state of things in the future. Valiantly take full advantage of school in the morning of life, learn and prepare yourself by that means for working and daring later on. Labour in your prime until your ribs crack: you can do so, and it is lucrative. In return, in the evening of life you will be at ease, and, as a comfortable man of means, enjoy refreshing leisure.

We must be allowed to laugh at this optimistic aspect of industrial life. If Henri Martin has known

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a docker—of Marseilles or any other place—who was able to end his life as a man of independent means, I should like to ask him for that man's photograph. Nevertheless, a painter need not be a political economist, and the picture is, you know, intended for a Savings Bank, and the people who will see it there may actually find themselves on the way to the independency that makes blessed, though hardly after noonday unloading of orange boats. We might be able to pass lightly over the poverty of thought in the work, if its artistic qualities were satisfactory. But there's the rub. It was indeed a questionable thought to put in juxtaposition three pictures separated only by slender pillars, which had to exhibit three absolutely different lights ; for either the lights of morning, noon, and evening were properly kept apart, and we had a discord in three notes, or the tones were pitched in one key in order not to shriek at each other, in which case they were untrue. Such is indeed the case. There is a somewhat more silvery breath about "Morning," a somewhat redder one about "Noon," a paler violet about "Evening" ; but the lights and shadows are about equally powerful, whatever be the position of the sun. The forest of masts in the middle panel is of such exaggerated density that the eye is confused in the maze of shrouds and yards. And the entire picture is executed in the crudest stippling, with dabs of colour thickly plastered on, so that it looks almost scaly. If Henri Martin could give up his vagaries and lack

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of good taste, he would be a monumental artist of lofty vocation; for, though the fairies have refused him sundry things, they have given him one precious gift when he was in his cradle, viz., that of light. There is sun in his pictures, and they brighten up the space they occupy.

His best work up to now is a huge wall-painting for the Capitol of Toulouse.

A landscape of big, restful lines with a background of dark-shadowed mountain forests, against which all I have to object is that they wall in the whole horizon. From this range of darkening blue heights the country sinks in undulating tiers of hills to the plain of the foreground. Here the idyll of the seasons and men's lives is developed in three pictures. First, amidst the laughing spring, a strapping maiden, intoxicated with love, on the breast of the young lad who is embracing her. Next, a number of stalwart country folk in the summer work of haymaking, on whom, beyond the cut grass, their wives and children at play are gazing. Lastly, under melancholy autumn trees, a lonely old woman preoccupied with recollections. The people are homely, of course, without crude realism, poetic without the shepherd-insipidity of Gessner. The parallelism between the aging of the men and women and the progress of the year is unforced; the symbolism clear and free from morbid, perverse mysticism. Turf, trees, and bushes are decorative in form, delicate, and at the same time sufficient in colour, and the whole

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is flooded by a wonderfully joyous sunshine, which is more reminiscent of the glories of May in Provence than even Montenard's symphonies of light. Henri Martin has, I admit, here, too, indulged in stippling, but he has given his people and trees strong, free outlines, and scarred only the outer skin very lightly with pock-marks. He has not abandoned that ill habit, but he seems to practise it with remorse. Perhaps he thinks gradual transition is due to his conversion to better insight. In any case, this picture was conceived and executed in a happy moment.

Henri Martin's career teaches a moral. Let him who would honour an artist continually bear in mind an appropriately modified reading of Solon's warning to Croesus: "Do not pronounce on any artist before his death."

JEAN RAFFAELLI.—Like Henri Martin, Sisley, and the other stipplers who painted with little dots, Jean François Raffaelli at first painted with thin, slightly serpentine strokes. And we have had to get accustomed to this manner. Raffaelli has been able to succeed, because he long favoured subjects for which his ripple lines were the suitable style. He painted poor people in poor landscapes, emaciated bodies in slatternly clothes under trees as dry as brooms. Like a raindrop on a window-pane, and like a tear on a furrowed cheek, the slender traces of colour flowed down these pitiable figures, arousing twilight imaginations

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of weeping, plaintive trickling, and dissolving. Later on he caught cheerful, coloured views of Paris streets — The Invalides, Notre Dame, and the Place St Michel. In these his streaky way of painting was somewhat inadequate ; but his amazing feeling for a crowd in the hurried, nervous movement which is peculiar to the Parisian lower orders, saved him. I know no painter who feels as Raffaelli the bustle of the world's metropolis. I think that any one who suffers from dread of the market-place, must get a feeling of fear at seeing his pictures.

In a third period of his production, Raffaelli gave a rare example of complete change in his maturity. He who had grown famous as a painter of the poor and miserable, of vices and sicknesses, turned, at the zenith of his success, from the aspects that he had hitherto cherished, and opened his heart to the joys of existence. In his mind a process occurred, such as the ninth symphony describes in eternal strains. In his despair a voice suddenly cries out: "Brothers, let us sing other strains," and roars out exultingly: "Joy, fair brightness of the gods." Formerly, he knew only abandoned tramps, tattered beggars and thieves, broken-down hospital brothers. His plant-world consisted of the leprous turf in front of the Paris forts, decayed flowers, the half-withered, suburban street trees, broomlike and leafless as in autumn. And he painted this misery in miserable colours and in his own peculiar, streaky manner, especially

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appropriate to the subject. Now he caresses with a broad, full brush bloomingly beautiful maidens in white raiment, sunny, ornamental gardens with rich *parterres*, fresh nosegays or living flowers. He has also changed his style with his subject. It is all renovated—palette, execution, and story. I have a feeling of a secret happiness having blossomed in this artist's soul, and I rejoice in the cheerful unconcern with which, by his altered work, he makes all men privy to his *Vita Nuova*.

ODILON REDON is a completed artist. His development is ended. It came from Gustave Moreau, and it never deviated from him. He is a delightful harmonist of colours, who handles the sharp and flat notes with equal mastery, and if he condescends to paint flowers, fruits, unpretentious still life, and landscapes every one can understand, he displays naturalness, taste, and winning homeliness. But when he strives for higher expression he gets beyond his master's range of vision, and becomes purely hallucinatory. Fabulous creatures, at once Pegasus and Centaur, stagger about amongst rare flowers, which gape like bleeding wounds or grin like vampires' mouths. Monsters without recognisable organic shape, bastard combinations of parts of dragons, beetles, birds and fishes hover or swim in an uncertain medium, which may be water, air, or ether. Dreadful human heads, bound in clusters, grow bushlike out of the ground. All this is in colour pleasing; in form, enigmatical.

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Gustave Moreau is always intelligible; we know the myths he clothes in forms of extrahuman and superhuman splendour. No one can make head or tail of Odilon Redon. He himself does not think at all in his unearthly representations, and they awaken no definite thoughts either, but affect us like wild faces in a fever.

PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR is also counted among the Impressionists and Naturalists. When we see that the same designation is applied to him as, for example, to Cézanne, we can, as it were, clutch with our hand the misuse of the words, and convince ourselves how senseless classification in art is. Renoir is certainly no painter of prettiness. He does not paint nature white and rosy, or stick beauty-patches on her face. He does not go out of his way even for pronounced ugliness. You have only to look at his two Megæras on the garden bench to be convinced of this; but beside these witches he has so much refreshing, individualised beauty, that one fails to understand how he could have been classed with Cézanne and, what is more, the routine Naturalists. His naked young woman with the mother-of-pearl flesh; his lady in a cashmere dressing-gown on the tapestry sofa; his girl in blue with the red cap, and the little sister in white; his two ladies with the roses, are simply charming. And love speaks no less from his chrysanthemums and his sunny meadows than from his men and

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women. He who has the same feeling as Renoir for roses and children, is not only a great painter, but also a good and noble man.

ALFRED ROLL is one of the most amiable figures in the art world of to-day. No one has such feeling as he for the exquisitely delicate silvery vapour of a May morning atmosphere, quivering with sunlight and saturated with dew. No one knows how to model out with such creative genius as he a human body from the daylight that flows around it in gushing torrents. In his free-light painting one breathes free from all oppression. Besides qualities which, in all ages, make a great artist, he has the little trace of corruption which makes him a legitimate son of our age. One of his masterpieces—the naked young woman who clings caressingly to the bull—awakes Pasiphaistic ideas of old classic aberration. To procure pardon for this picture, he had to do no less than paint the splendidly healthy peasant girl with the brimming milk-pail and the cow—certainly a worthy penance.

Roll is, to be sure, not always the charming, luminous painter of the milk-maid and the girl with the bull. He very often strikes other notes. Thus, for instance, in his picture inspired by socialism, which he calls "The Martyr's Road," he shows an old tramp who, with his back leaning against a tree, has collapsed by the wayside, has let his wallet fall beside him, and appears to be about to give up the ghost. The misery of his worn countenance already

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overshadowed by death, of his emaciated figure and tattered clothes are convincing. On the other hand, it is open to question whether it was good taste to paint the dying man in front view, with bold foreshortening of the outstretched legs, and with boot-soles of a terrific size, that rear up before us, in the extreme foreground, like two *præ-historic menhirs*. Roll intended to pay his homage to Maxim Gorki also. Was it from sincere feeling, or to show that he is *dans le mouvement*, and is keeping step with the most advanced of his time?

He has insisted on trying his hand at monumental decoration also. The fruit of his effort is a gigantic picture which he entitles "Life's Joys." He has evidently thought of Watteau, probably of the latter's "Embarcation to Cythera." It is the same blissful landscape with roses, trees, and water that seems, in the haze of the distance, to continue interminably until it reaches Paradise. It is the same air which the rain of blossom renders coloured and almost opaque. It is the same spring sky which we might hail with shouts of joy. The men and women, however, who give life to this Eden, are different to Watteau's. In Roll, everything is marvellously austere and hard. His women in the foreground are naked, and partly lie in Michael Angelesque attitudes on the grass, partly sit there overpoweringly monumental. Loving couples, walking and dancing, behave as if they were possessed by wild, brutal lust. Something like

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a tragic current is traceable amidst this idyll. We exclaim in alarm : "Here, this very day, there will yet be murder or manslaughter." And with the object of destroying still more the ideal note of May, Roll puts, in the midst of this fairy-tale splendour, three realistic musicians, whose clothes were bought at *la Belle Jardinière*, who will certainly, after every dance, go round with a plate and collect from their audience. Where will the nude ladies take money from to throw to them? How much more charmingly and wittily does Watteau begin his theme! Only a marble statue of a woman renounces the advantages of elegant toilettes. Winged Cupids flit about the young couples, and translate, as it were, into lyrical, rhymed verses the naturalistic prose of the gallantry exhibited. The men do not rage in brutal eagerness, but pay delicate and discreet court to their ladies. And above all things, Watteau's infallible taste warns him against telling his stories at excessive length. As brevity is the soul of wit, so moderate compass is a great advantage in an Anacreontic scene. This should be elegant and pleasant; but the monstrous excludes elegance and pleasantness. Roll's Titans and Cyclopes are not suitable for masquerading as Arcadian shepherds.

LUCIEN SIMON, a painter who has been an imitator of Cottet, puts himself forward now, by an impetuous movement, into rank with him. "The

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"Evening Gossip" unites the family round the table lamp, which lights up a number of richly animated faces with curious lights that play and flicker. "Nuns Collecting"—one old and one young nun try by gentle yet tenacious and irrefusible pressure to overcome the resistance of a well-to-do and apparently somewhat niggardly country lady, and to determine her to open her well-guarded purse. In a "Ball-room in Brittany" peasant couples, in the dress of the Celtic province, under smoking lamps emitting a yellow light, spin round, with heavy stampings, to a bagpipe tune which drives the blood into the simple dancers' browned cheeks, and kindles sparks in their eyes. All this is stumped in broadly and luxuriously without petty dwelling on the less essential, yet with a sure feeling for what is characteristic in appearance and movement, and in a harmony of dark colours, which is as far remote from the bright tone of the style of painting in vogue the day before yesterday as a Guido Reni is from a Franz Hals, but affirms its own justification as self-consciously as the particular note struck by a Hennar and Gustave Moreau among the moderns, of a Velasquez and Rembrandt among the greatest ancients.

Up to now, his most important creation is his "Mass in Brittany," a work of an exquisite nature. The young and old peasants and seamen who hear High Mass standing in the bare village church, are truly and lovingly individualised head by head. Proudly renouncing pleasing externals,

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L. Simon has made up his mind to produce his effects only by the noblest means, viz., by characterising with accuracy these manifold types, and by the depth and fulness of the spiritual life of these pious folk here gathered together. Offence has been taken at the broadness of his execution, which already bordered on superficiality, and on the coarseness of his colour, which put one now and then in mind of the bill-poster's newer art. He has laboured conscientiously on himself, and diminished the defects of his qualities without weakening the latter. He still continues to paint with large strokes in fresco style, but he pays attention to the solid building of his figures. He is still pronounced and unaffected in his colouring, but he avoids letting power degenerate into coarseness, and expressiveness into shrillness. Thus Lucien Simon rises slowly and steadily, though unerringly, to the lofty peaks of pre-eminence.

JEAN VEBER is quite a peculiar phenomenon which has not yet been deservedly appreciated. On one characteristic ground: because he never understood how to be solemn; because he seems not to take himself or his art seriously. He began as a caricature draughtsman for Boulevard papers, and only when his vocation for this peculiar province was well established, did he exhibit oil-paintings. But he was already labelled, and people continue to regard him merely as a comic draughtsman. The public refuses to allow a double renown to a single

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talent. Its admiration, you know, costs nothing, but it is, nevertheless, scanty with it, as if it were bringing a sacrifice obtainable only with difficulty. That is a royal trait in the sovereign mob. It is niggardly with its distinctions in order to enhance their value. The splendid Daumier also had to suffer from this coyness on the part of the public. For a long time nothing was thought of his easel pictures, and it was really the Universal Exhibition of 1900 that first revealed to posterity the fact that Daumier of the "Charivari" was one of the most important French painters of the nineteenth century. The caricaturist of our days is, as it were, the journalist among plastic artists, and we know that it is very hard for journalists to succeed with poetical creations, however brilliant. The older humorists among the painters fared better. The Dutch painters could make rough fun of the life of the populace without injuring their reputation as artists by so doing. Hogarth attained high recognition, although his clumsy, Philistine, moralising painting ranks below the works of many caricaturists of to-day. Cruikshank, however, whom I rank, without hesitation, above Hogarth, occupies, in popular estimation, a lower rank, because he put his pencil at the service of the Press.

Jean Veber is the descendant in the direct line of the younger David Teniers, the Adriaen Brouwers, and the Höllen-Breughels. From them he derives his full style of painting, his deep, rich colours, his

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great sureness and luxuriance of execution, his clear composition and florid imagination. He differs, however, from them in the quality of his fancy which delights in symbols replete with philosophical references; frequently in Saadic spectacles of cruelty and lust, and very often in lubricities of the Félicien Rops kind. This is the effect of the hundred and fifty to three hundred years which separate him from his more innocent spiritual ancestors.

Of the pictures he has exhibited, some are unforgettable, when one has seen them. The "Triumphal Procession" of a gigantic crowned goose through the streets of a mighty city, amid the loud applause of a populace raving mad with loyalty. The "Struggle for Gold" of a number of awful cripples tearing each other to pieces in their mad struggles for a few gold pieces that have fallen in the street; the "Sight of Terror" of a man reeling home at night, apparently after a long drinking-bout, in whose eyes the houses and monuments take weird, living physiognomies, are most impressive utterances of the misanthropic pessimism, the satiric bitterness, and the humour of Veber, also, to be sure, of his predilection for the weird, the ghostly, and the horrible.

These qualities are repeated in almost all his works up to now. The greatest and most pretentious, "The Machine," offends through the daring symbolism by which he illustrates the murderous power of woman over the sensual man. On the other hand, "Sunday Morning" is a bit of life observed with exquisite

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humour: a barber's shop in the village, with a soaped victim under the nimble but not too considerate hands of the beard - shaver's wife, whilst some other customers, of unspeakable comicality in looks, bearing, and dress, smoking, dreaming, staring, or chattering, wait their turn on the bench by the wall. "The Hermit and the Female Faun" is a scarcely orthodox, but keenly witty modernisation of the old theme, the temptation of a saint, which these square-toes of painters for the past five hundred years have cherished with predilection, since it permits them to present quite heathen sights with a hypocritically contrite air. "The Three Good Friends" are of refreshing cheeriness. The ugliness of these contented louts is touching. The painter, by way of exception, exhibits them without malice, rather sympathetically, with a plea for extenuating circumstances. But generally, his wit belongs, in the main, to the species of evil-speaking. We laugh over the malice with which a sharp-tongued observer characterises our fellow-creatures, but we feel quite well that it is not the better man in us that laughs. Jean Veber loves to mock at mankind in goblin fashion. He sees men perpendicularly pushed together like a telescope, horizontally drawn out as short, square gnomes with pumpkin faces, who, pleased with themselves and unconscious of their grotesque ugliness, strut about as if they were so many Apollos and Dianas. Thus Jaurès appears with mouth agape and flourishing gestures on the rostrum of the

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Chamber, at the foot of which breaks a flood of blustering deputies in stormy session. So in a parody of Rubens' "Kermes"—itself of the nature of a parody—villagers resembling sacks amuse themselves with feasting and drinking and amorous tendernesses which are calculated to disgust us with love itself. A grandly rigged-out, inexpressibly laughing lady in a low-cut dress between two greybeards paying their dreadful court at an exquisitely appointed supper-table; a physician at the foot of the bed gazing with devotion at the tongue, put out quite a yard, of a rich, fat lady-patient; a short, stout woman in a fashionable tailor's *salon*, whom the slenderest of the show-room girls is trying, with "cake-walk" movements, to fit with a dress like an umbrella-cover, are amusing in their stupidity and ugliness. On the other hand, I cannot follow Jean Veber further when, in "Family Joys," he tries to make the newborn child ridiculous—a shapeless bit of sprawling flesh, red as a crab, which the midwife has brought from the bed of the exhausted mother at the back of the room, and is exhibiting in triumph to the gaping family. He should keep his sacrilegious hand off the sanctity of this event.

The happy combination of a faultless dexterity with an arrogant, creative humour, in which I would only like to see a trifle less admixture of gall, renders Jean Veber's an artistic physiognomy that is far more interesting than many an idol to whom altars are raised.

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EMILE WÉRY, a young and fortunate man of talent, began his career with a great success. His view of an Amsterdam canal made a sensation, and gained the great prize at the "Salon." Perhaps a little stupefied by this triumph, he kept for a while to the style of his prize picture, so that there was reason to fear he would early stiffen into a manner. He painted, for instance, an attractive triptych, which presents Venice to us in her three characteristic decorations: the narrow *Calle*, the slender *Rio*, and the splendid *Canal*. But what we cannot anyhow fancy absent from a view of Venice—the southern sky, the gleaming sun, and the warm tints of her old stones and tiles: these are here altogether lacking. It is all grey, northern grey. It is the same tone as in the prize picture of Amsterdam. As Faust found Helen in every woman, so Wéry then found apparently Dutch water-towns in every town, and Amsterdam herself in Venice. People think they are flattering the city on the Amstel, when they call it the Venice of the North. Wéry reversed the compliment: to him Venice was the Amsterdam of the South. How true it is that we see not with the eyes but with the soul!

The South, combined with his youthful impulses to development, was to save him from the danger of mannerism. Though he had seen Venice with his Amsterdam eyes, and found in the azure and gold of the city of lagunes the leaden waters and mist of the north, further south, in the light, he

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bathed his eyes clean from the muddiness of higher latitudes. In "Sicily" a girl's brown head, with red cloth in the midst of a cluster of dark green-leaved branches with ripe oranges, flashes and glows the whole noon of the magic island, which this vigorous woman—a golden fruit among golden fruits—is to personify. But even after his return home he still remained drunk with the light of Italy. In a new picture, "The Little Ones," we are once more in a harbour on the North Sea, at a place where Wéry's talent takes its root. Flaxen-haired youngsters are playing round a boat; one of these, a little chap in wide, flapping trousers, is droll enough to eat. Water, sky, and river-bank are wedded in silver sheen, and over the whole reposes a happy sense of comfort, in which the artist's cheerful heart is disclosed. He has happily got over his first crisis. Now his artistic career lies smooth and sunny before him.

ANDERS ZORN.—This Swede is a virtuoso of amazing skill. He delights in marvellous effects of light, in surprises, in fixing fugitive views. His pictures are snap-shots pitched on the canvas with an almost mechanically smart brush. He is a concert painter possessing talent. He is one of the great corruptors of young artists nowadays. It is so fascinating, by a few wild, staggering, nimble strokes of the brush, to conjure up a human figure or a scene. But this method leads to the worst

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superficiality, and attracts most the lazy fellows who wish to save themselves the trouble of learning properly the principles of drawing and painting. Zorn did not make the thing easy for himself. He honestly and industriously acquired a thorough mastery of technique before turning to execute his dazzling little pieces. He may allow himself to storm and rage over the canvas, for accuracy has become automatic in him. In spite of this haste, every line is on the right spot, and though people often regret that he only hints instead of stopping and deepening, nevertheless it is continually said : "The man knows how to build up a figure or a group." His imitators, however, have caught only his daubing, and with them superficiality is but a bold excuse for ignorance of drawing.

IGNACIO ZULOAGA.—Spain can at the present time boast of a number of painters who might call out to their greatest predecessors among their countrymen the proud *anch'io*. What characterises them is a peculiar, almost mad energy in drawing, which appears in all details, in the living and the dead, not only in the mien and attitudes of men, but in the sharp profile of every leaf and blade of grass, in the bold relief of every stone, in the aggressive self-consciousness of every being as of every thing. This energy is not to be learnt. One has it or one has it not. There are foreign painters in plenty, whom Spain has bewitched, and who their whole life long

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recount nothing but bull-fights and processions, shepherds and gipsies, *cigarreras* and *manolas*; but no one who knows the genuine Spaniards will confuse these with the foreign imitators. There is, for instance, the excellent Jules Worms. He has been exhibiting Spanish scenes uninterruptedly for forty years. They are always nicely painted, prettily conceived, and pleasantly executed. As contributions to knowledge of the nation they are not without value. They have gained him all official honours, and he passes for an undisputed master of his particular province. And yet how un-Spanish is this life-long Spanishness of Worms and all his rivals and imitators! It is as smooth, licked, tricked up, entertaining, and banal as the railway novel of an inquisitive but superficial globe-trotter. It is a conventional comic-opera Spanishness, a theatre decoration for scenery, with groups of costumes for living figures. It lacks the power, the stern virility which distinguishes the Spanish painters, even those of the second rank, and gives them a family likeness to their great ancestors, Valdes, Velasquez, and Ribera.

The most typical of these modern Spaniards is Ignacio Zuloaga, and the most typical, perhaps, of his pictures are the three sketches from Spanish folk-life, which were exhibited a few years ago in the "Salon." An Andalusian, young, thin, and delicate, with a little crumpled face of apish ugliness, with a supple body that seems to whirl, stands in front of a poor mirror, and powders her face with coarse

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rice-powder, as though she were sticking on a comic Pierrot-mask, whilst her sparkling eyes testify that she wants to make herself thoroughly beautiful for the bull-fight. Then we see her in loud, bright ribbons, with the inimitably draped mantilla over her head and shoulders, passing quickly through the street, greeted by two old connoisseurs with highly-spiced endearment. On the third occasion she or her sister goes with a diabolically piquant young gipsy girl, whose insolent laugh discovers gleaming wolf's teeth and turns up the sharply-curved nose, rapidly over the ground, probably to keep a Sabbath, from the expression of both grimaces. This is warm life such as not often glows on painted canvas. Zuloaga has felt his Andalusian wild creatures to his finger-tips, and renders them with all their *garbo* and *salero*—the German *Schneid* and *Mumm*, and the French *montant* and *mousseux* are weak translations of this expression. The pictures seem to be painted, not with mineral colours and oil, but with sulphuric acid and lunar-caustic. These ladies are young witches, of whom you would imagine that by touch they must give an electric shock like a torpedo-fish, that, if they open their mouths, red mice will jump out, and that it must be more natural for them to ride through the air on a broom-stick than to make use of their legs in the usual way. In the piquant ugliness of their faces, made up with a thick layer of rice-powder, in the gorgeous Sunday array, in their attitudes and movements, in

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the gipsy-girl's bestially insolent grinning and winking, in the lustful glances and laughter of the men, there is a fulness of hot life, an insolent sensuality such as is only met with in Brangwyn's youthful works. One often heard the name of Goya pronounced before these pictures. It is indeed the same temperament, but another outlook on life, another art. Zuloaga has much of the cutting virtuosity of his great countryman; but he is no embittered critic of the world, rather a laughing Sunday's child who enjoys life with all his senses.

And, above all, his pictures are patterns of a domestic art which, through its unreserved sincerity, is at the same time an universal art. For it reaches so deeply that it penetrates beyond the special type to humanity in general.

### XIII

## AUGUSTE RODIN

RODIN'S place in present-day art is a peculiar one. Auguste Rodin has been raised to the dignity of a test for decadent ways of feeling. We admittedly call "tests" or proof-objects the objects (for the most part, the shell-armour of diatoms or the scales of butterflies' wings) on which the magnifying power and exactness of analysis of microscopes is tested. By Rodin the fanatics and snobs of insane tendencies test the genuineness and power of symbolico-mystic sentiment. What do you think of Rodin? Do you admire him? Good: then you need further only adore Besnard and rave about Félicien Rops, and you can claim to be numbered with the newest, without respect to the colour of your hair or opportunist baldness. You do not admire Rodin? Then sneak whimpering from our league. You are no decadent. No beauty with her hair combed in the Botticelli style will love you; Mallarmé will not write poems, nor will Nietzsche philosophise for you.

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Nobody will invite you even to a Black Mass. Go to the Philistines ; you belong to the narrow-minded community, which is a herd of ruminants.

It would be intelligible if the provocations of the shriekers, who, after the manner of howling dervishes, dance and rave round Rodin, were to induce men to take a violent part against this very man. Justice, however, demands that people should suppress their natural tendency to make him responsible for the ear-piercing din of his drummers and trumpeters. After all, he cannot help a horde of swindlers and silly people making a vulgar disturbance about him and his works. If we are to judge him, we must try to forget that critical offenders, by invoking his name, continually outrage the sense of æsthetic decorum and artistic conscience. Rodin is, in fact, not the originator of this shameless proceeding, but the victim of the æsthetic Catiline conspirators who have got possession of him, and are pushing him on before them, so that it looks from a distance as if he was their leader. Rodin is not the least *cabotin*. He is of a modest, homely nature, but no strong character ; and he has not been able to stand against the suggestions of those whose interest it is to eulogise him, who have for so long chattered his poor head full of their most brain-firing, æsthetic doctrines, and most profound interpretations of his alleged purposes, until he has lost his own personality, and makes the most desperate efforts to become like the picture which

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his critical Corybantes present of him to the open-mouthed gapers.

What has raised Rodin to an article of faith among the degenerates is three peculiarities. First, the choice of his materials, which appeal to the mysticism and sensual psychopathy of his body-guard of degenerates; secondly, his technique, which deviates from tradition in childish, would-be-original whims; and thirdly, his mistaking the natural limitations of his art, which he wants to make say things for which sculpture possesses no means of expression. These traits are proved by a short review of his principal works.

The production which first brought him the custom of the decadents is a composition which was devised for the gate of Dante's *Inferno*. He had worked at it for decades. After a few fragments, which were to be seen in 1889 in the Universal Exhibition at Paris, he showed the whole in a plaster model at his private exhibition of 1900. It is inspired unmistakably by Ghiberti's door of the Baptistry at Florence, but stands in intentional contrast to it. The great Quattrocentist depicts life in Paradise; Rodin's intention is to show existence in Hell. The framing and articulation of the work, and nearly all its details, were rendered with organic necessity from this starting-point. The door is cut up into panels, which are not divided by stiff, geometrical lines, but, just as in the case of Ghiberti, are at the same time immediately separated, and again indirectly

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connected into a higher unity, by a feature of the picture itself, *e.g.*, a cliff, a man's figure, a piece of building. In every panel an act from the *Inferno* is played. The parts, in the majority of cases indicated only in a sketchy way, betray strong, indeed mainly perversely directed, erotic imagination, and the gift of exhibiting human bodies in the movements of passion. Of course, Rodin, too, has not dropped down from heaven, but is the descendant of easily demonstrable spiritual forefathers. This sculpture of violent action, a particular development of French art, and in no way connected with the Laocoön, as one might easily make the mistake of assuming, has its first master in Rude, whose power is revealed most grandly in the "Marseillaise" on the Triumphal Arch at Paris. Rude's successor and continuer is the incomparable Carpeaux, who, as is most clear from his group "The Dance" at the Grand Opera, in place of the wild heroes of his model and master, substituted wild Bacchantes; who celebrated, instead of self-oblivious joy in sacrifice in the service of rugged duty, self-oblivious intoxication in a debauch of sensuality, but represented a life of excitement no less sublimely and no less ravishingly than the former. Rodin is closely connected with Rude and Carpeaux. With him passion descends a step lower still to the uncivilised and dissolute. Heroic with Rude, voluptuous with Carpeaux, it is Satanic with Rodin. The "Gate of Hell" exhibits rows of naked women in all the situations and occupations of the witches' Sabbath,

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when it is most devilish. Fits of hysteria shake and twist these bodies, every motion of which betrays shocking aberration and eager Sadism. The patients of the Salpêtrière or the Atlas of Pictures edited in this *clinique (Iconographie de la Salpêtrière)* evidently served him for models. And from him, be it incidentally observed, Alexander appears to have drawn his inspirations with the aggravating circumstance that he clothes Rodin's naked women in rich, modern toilettes, and by this artful means makes them even more obscene. The feminine genius of tragedy in Rude is inspired by Tyrtæan war-songs. Carpeaux's two female dancers have drunk sparkling wine; Rodin's demoniac women have swallowed pills of Spanish-fly. Thus it is clear that Rodin must be dear to all wanton schoolboys, impotent debauchees, and incipient spinal sufferers.

If the "Gate of Hell" is an illustration of hystero-epilepsy and feminine Sadism, so, too, is a marble group which he exhibited in 1898 of Masochism. A naked woman with horribly glacial, unmoved features sits leaning against a wall of rock. A man, apparently growing out of the earth, kneels before the merciless image, embraces its knees with despairingly imploring gesture, and presses his head against its body. This is supposed to show man in an ecstasy of desire, subjugated by the sexual power of woman. I can only say that a copy of this group would excellently suit as a frontispiece for an edition of the collected works of Sacher-Masoch.

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Other smaller groups of Rodin, which he exhibited in the Champs de Mars Salon, hint at other forms of morbid sensuality on which I am reluctant to dwell. They all disclose a sub-soil of corrupted sensuality in the artist's soul. That secures him influence on natures in harmony with his own. The degenerates who revel with Baudelaire in love of corpses, and with Félicien Rops in highly-spiced lewdness, find the same excitation in Rodin, and they intoxicate themselves with his ecstatic lasciviousness just as with the unnatural or madly exaggerated eroticism of their other fleshly poets and painters.

So much for Rodin's choice of themes. Now for his technique. One of his singularities is that he loves to astonish people by a crude, external contrast between a block of unworked marble and the most exquisitely finished and sweetly polished sculpture of bodies. He takes a great cube out of all proportion, which he leaves as the labourer hewed it as it came out of the quarry; and he works a little corner of it into a head and body polished with the utmost nicety. In this way, the figure grows out of, or into, the natural stone. Looked at from three sides, a lump of rock or stone is presented to the eye, only on the fourth side the work of art is revealed, blooming, as it were, in the wilderness. We may describe this manner as the sculptural form of mysticism. The association of ideas which Rodin wishes to awaken by this device should make the idea

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dawn on the consciousness that here, before our eyes, a miracle of creation is being accomplished ; that we surprise the very incarnation of the stone ; that we are witnesses of the birth of organic form from the stiff, lifeless original matter, and may observe how the figure, still half imprisoned in chaos, struggles painfully forth to a form instinct with life. There are subjects for the representation of which Rodin's style would have been a happy invention : perhaps the creation of Adam from a clod of earth, or the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, or a Promethean motive. But its uniform employment for all possible subjects—on banal busts or groups which have no reference to creation or genesis—causes the manner to be recognised for what it is, a snatching at effect by means of eccentricity. Of course, this striking and easily imitable freak has founded a school. No American or Scandinavian who wants to frighten the Philistines with "modernism" neglects to exhibit a piece of, for the most part, wretched sculpture as tiny as possible on a clump of unworked rock as Cyclopean as possible. It cannot be said that the joke is cheap. The unhewn block of marble often represents a pretty stiff value in hard cash, in any case a higher one than the corner that has been chiselled. One can only say that any idiot can succeed in using a ton weight of stone as a support to a figure the size of a man's hand.

Yet, in conclusion, it is a comparatively harmless

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folly which a practitioner can remedy with a few strokes of the saw. It is sufficient to cut the sculpture off, and give the rough block to a needy sculptor. Far worse, because it is incurable, is the æsthetic principle to which Rodin pays homage in the technique of his more important works especially. He is, to wit, an Impressionist. A line of motion in an individuality or group interests him. He seizes it, shapes it with convincing truth, with an emphasis exaggerated—certainly purposely—to the point of caricature, and neglects everything that does not serve to illustrate this line of motion. Sculpture, however, is an art which does not allow any Impressionism. It demands, according to its nature, a perfectly accurate formation of the whole figure, and simple honesty in reproducing the phenomenon. This can be proved by a theory of perception. Sculpture fills space and is of three dimensions; it addresses itself, in the first place, certainly to the eye, but also to the sense of touch. It calls for stereoscopic vision, and is, at least in theory, capable of further proof by a second sense. Now just this theoretic possibility of further proof, by means of the sense of touch, has the prohibitive effect, that fancy feels no inclination to supplement the image provided by the sense of sight. In works of painting we add in our mind much which is not optically given in the picture. In plastic works we have not this psychical habit, because a testing with the hands is opposed to

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the free, inventive power of the imagination, and makes us at once recognise what has been given in space, and what has been added by our imagination. On this ground, there is no place in sculpture for intentions or hints. That is enough for a rough plan, but not for the finished work. Rodin, however, stops at a stage of completion, which may, at best, pass for a promise, but never, in any case, for an achievement. He deliberately breaks up the frame of artistic form. He would fain work with the habits of the painter's eye and the painter's hand, and he applies this treatment to the statute, standing free and exposed to examination from all sides.

The confused lines which represent the draughtsman's first sketch (*ébauche*) have their special charm and meaning on the surface to be painted. If, however, you translate them into three dimensions, if every careless movement of the artist's hand, either still feeling its way or hurrying on, is finally fixed in clay or bronze, something inadmissible results, which has no right to proclaim itself a work of art.

Such a seeking after the right expression, such a stammering in metal is Rodin's monument at Calais, which represents the burgesses of Calais with the rope round their necks, standing before Edward III., who had successfully besieged that city, and asking for mercy. The crushed spirit which Rodin tried to express is actually visible in the group; but the figures which express this emotion are formless from head to foot. The limbs are rugged boughs;

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bodies violate the laws of anatomy ; the whole group is on the stage of technical perfection reached by the idols hewn from wood by the South Sea Islanders, and is far inferior to many a pre-historic picture on mammoth's teeth and stag's horn, which may be seen, for instance, in the Museum of St Germain. Rodin's domestic trumpeters promptly proclaimed this for a work of lofty genius. The Corporation of the town of Calais, who had ordered it, dared not reject it. The decadents' reign of terror—it was in the year 1895—was then in all its fury. The whole Paris Press was in the power of the dictators of the Chat Noir, and the poor Calais burgesses, clever men of business, but very uncertain in questions of art, feared to be jeered at as wise men of Gotham, if they rebelled against the æsthetic edicts of the tyrants of Paris criticism. But they blush for shame and anger whenever they pass by the memorial, and now, when the reign of terror of decadent criticism is over, it will probably not be long before the Calais people pluck up courage enough to have Rodin's bronze abomination carted off from the public square, and withdrawn, in a store-room in the Town Hall, from the scornful eyes of strangers.

A counterpart of the Calais group is the design for the Victor Hugo Memorial, which was for the first time exhibited in 1897, and again five years later, when it was somewhat further advanced. This design also showed nothing but intentions. The poet is sitting naked by the seashore. The last

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shallow wave washes gently up to his feet. Two female tutelary figures—perhaps History and Legend, or Poetry and Philosophy — are flying to him horizontally at the level of his head and whispering secrets in his ear. As a mere intention, the composition might be allowed to pass ; but nothing of execution, practically, was yet to be seen. Victor Hugo's body was not modelled ; the flying female figures could not be distinguished, either from a distance or on close inspection, from cloud packs, or the fantastic animal figures of Gothic gargoyles. Nevertheless, Rodin disarmed intelligent criticism by declaring that the work was a mere sketch. Of course, he could no longer be fairly reproached with its shapelessness, and people had to content themselves with waiting for its completion, which has not come to pass up to now.

Rodin has overstepped, in his Balzac Memorial, which he first exhibited in 1898, the very extensive limits within which his silly aberrations might have been borne. Master Shallow, who tolerates much, could not tolerate this work, and broke down under its crushing exaction. When the public saw this provocative monstrosity, it broke out into that uncontrollable laughter, whereby the outraged intelligence of mankind revenges itself with primitive force for restraints that it has long suffered in silence. In the face of this result, the Committee of the French Union of Authors, which had commissioned the Balzac Memorial, resolved unanimously to decline

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it. In vain the Condottieri, who had usurped supremacy in art criticism by the most unscrupulous methods of conspiracy, violence, and oppression, made desperate efforts to maintain themselves. They were powerless against the armed rising of sensible people who had at last come to themselves. Their tyranny was vanquished, and they were swept away. They might still talk all sorts of twaddle about the stupidity of the masses, and, in impotent rage, hiss at the victors the well-known shibboleths, "Philistine," "provincial," etc., but this final, faint-hearted nagging sank unheard in the unanimous cry of scorn from public opinion.

Rodin has represented Balzac as, jumping out of bed in the morning, he wraps himself unclad in his monk-like dressing-gown, without even putting his arms in the sleeves, irresistibly impelled to hurry to his writing-table in order to fix the thoughts of which his creative brain is full to bursting. Agreed: that, again, is the intention which Rodin might, perhaps, have secretly put into the figure. What the eye really sees is a sort of tree-trunk, hewn in the roughest manner by a woodman with an axe, which is surmounted by a hideously swollen tadpole head on a goitred neck. Malicious Parisian wit has exhausted all the droll comparisons that this monstrosity can suggest to flouting humour. People have called Rodin's work a meal-sack, a carved potato, a snow-man made by a cheeky schoolboy, an unpacked statue, a stalactite, etc. The work is all that, for it

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is nothing at all ; but it is pre-eminently the conclusive refutation of Rodin's æsthetics. For it is the highest expression, and, on that account, the unintentional parody, of his impressionist technique and of his third mistake, viz., ignorance of the limitations of his art.

Rodin worked at this wretched piece of work for ten whole years. First he read all Balzac's works ; then he made a journey to Touraine and spent months there, so as to absorb the human environment from which Balzac took so many of his models, and to become permeated with the feelings and impressions with which Balzac may have satiated himself when composing—all this to make a human figure which was to be the likeness of a man whom many people now living have known in the flesh. After these preliminary studies, Rodin finally proceeded to form his Balzac. His head was to be "a synthesis of his works," his physiognomy was to be summed up "in an eye that looks on the *Comédie humaine* and in an upper lip that is curled in contempt for humanity." So said Rodin himself in several interviews which were published at the time when his statue was exhibited. He was then merely repeating what the twaddlers of Montmartre had chattered to him. It would be easy to make jests about this inflammation of the brain, but it is not worth even cheap raillery. It is quite enough to establish, soberly and drily, that Rodin, like a child or an idiot, aimed at something impossible. Sculpture

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cannot furnish any "synthesis of Balzac's works." Nature herself cannot, in the sense that Balzac himself, when he was alive, did not synthetise his works, in his externals, in his physiognomy. He had perhaps the head of a man of mark, but there was assuredly nothing in his face to show that he had written the "Physiology of Marriage," and not written "La Chartreuse de Parme" (Stendhal). Rodin imagined that a portrait-statue could quite alone, merely by its own means, supply the place of a biography and a psychological and literary characterisation of the person represented. This patent lunacy was necessarily bound to end, as it has ended, in a mad caricature.

"The Thinker," a colossal statue which was exhibited in 1904, is almost as bad an aberration as Balzac. It is a gigantic enlargement of a little sketch that one saw many years ago over Rodin's "Gate of Dante's Hell," in the confused and scarcely indicated unborn *foetus* lines of which confident devotion might imagine all possible promises of future splendour.

The promises are realised in "The Thinker." He who still wishes to shudder with foreboding in the presence of the finished work will be at liberty to do so. It will be the same sort of man who grew enthusiastic over the "Balzac," before which every criticism of intelligent—not "intellectual"—men dissolved into unextinguishable laughter. "The Thinker" is brother of the "Balzac," only it is not

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so comic, for it is not dressed in a meal-sack, but is naked, and the bared human body, when misshapen, excites in a spectator of uninitiated taste, not cheerfulness, but discomfort, which may even rise to loathing.

"The Thinker" is not only naked, but also flayed. Its anatomy is executed with obtrusive importance, without the covering epidermis with its vital warmth. The enormous exaggeration of the muscles, the impossible assertion of strength which is expressed by the extreme contraction of all the muscles, therefore also of the counteracting muscles, are well-known features of sculpture in its worst period of decline. There is still, however, a distinction between Rodin and the *rococo* sculptors, who confused fleshy tumours over the whole surface of the bodies of their statues with the power of portraying artistically. At any rate, the latter had a correct knowledge of myology, or the subject of the muscles, whereas Rodin's anatomy is shockingly inaccurate. I really do not think much of Lorenzo Mattheielly's groups at the Vienna Hofburg-gates; but in the face of Rodin's monstrosity I apologise in my heart for all the objections I have ever made against them. At any rate, with Mattheielly every muscle occupies its proper place. Rodin, however, invents muscles which do not exist, and never did exist. Two mighty ridges, ending below in sausage-tips, run down the "Thinker's" back, which are perhaps intended for the two *longissimi dorsi*; in this case, however, they are howling blunders as regards their attachment, their

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whole course, and their form. The muscles of the forehead and temples are treated quite as arbitrarily as those of the back. Where nature only recognises thin cutaneous muscles and ligatures, there Rodin puts bumps which remind one of blood tumours after blows from a club, and impart to the face the appearance of evil *Verschlagenheit*; not, as Fritz Reuter says, in the sense of craftiness, but in that of receiving a sound cudgeling. As a record "The Thinker" stands on the same level as the anatomical plates in Japanese manuals of the healing art of the time of the Shoguns.

This, however, is not yet the worst; the intellectual element fares even worse than the bodily one with this oaf who calls himself so pretentiously "The Thinker." The flayed man sits crouching, with a distinctly crooked hump, on a sharp-edged block of stone. His toes claw convulsively into the ground. He holds a clenched fist before his mouth, and seems to bite it fiercely. His bestial countenance, with its bloated, contracted forehead, gazes as threateningly dark as midnight. He who has to interpret the figure without the help of a title will, from a back view, conclude it is some one writhing in agony on the rack; and from a front view, a criminal meditating over some foul deed. Its mien and bearing would suggest a designation such as "The Fallen Titan," "Lucifer's Rebellion," or "Cain before he murdered his Brother." The last thing which one would think of would be to look for a

## Auguste Rodin

mind working behind this bulgy forehead, or to imagine that thought was supreme in this body seized by a spasm of rigidity in all its muscles. The name given by Rodin to this wretched performance sounds like a scoff or a calumny, and it might be thought the misled artist, robbed by his fanatics of all self-criticism, had intended to make a malicious parody of Michael Angelo's *Pensieroso*.

Rodin himself, by his portrait busts, makes it possible to gauge the whole insincerity of his pose as a profound thinker, and his genius-playing arrogance; for instance, by that of Octave Mirbeau, and, still more easily, by a female bust which was exhibited at the same time as "The Thinker" monstrosity. With the exception of the folly, which is, moreover, not too obtrusive, that a piece of the rough block was allowed to remain on both shoulders, there was not the faintest feature in the bust that could differentiate it from a severely classical, coldly correct work. Here he had to satisfy a lady client, and he was irreproachably smooth, executed all the details lovingly, and produced a soft, delicate flesh, to which the elegant Injalbert might sign his name. If one were desirous of making an objection to this pleasant bust, it would, at worst, be that it is too sweet. He becomes the destroyer of all form, the bungling sham-Titan, the inscrutable philosopher, dramatist, and lyric poet, whose eye rolls in a fine frenzy, and who, in the throes of his fever to create, confines himself to hurried indications—he becomes

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all this only when he works for his bodyguard of sympathetic sensitivism.

How future generations will laugh over all this buffoonery of "nerve art"! Only, indeed, when it comes to know the comments of contemporary "intellectuals" in addition to the artists' silly bungling. For the former will show them in a way to excite sympathy and amusement what devastation the deafening babble of a band of gossips, dreadfully ignorant of art and innocent of any feeling for beauty, could produce in the taste and thought of a large majority, which honestly yearns after aesthetic education, but, on account of a lack of trustworthy traditions and adequate instruction in art, has not sufficient self-confidence to set up the promptings, however obscure, of their own feeling against the impudent dictates of presumptuous arbiters of taste.

Mysticism and sexual psychopathy in the choice of themes; Impressionism and incidental eccentricities in technique; overstepping the limitations of his art, have made Rodin the great man of the fellows who for some two decades have set the fashion in art and literature. By these three peculiarities, to which he owes his spurious celebrity, he will be ruined as an artist, whatever the success he owes to puffing may be. And that is lamentable, for Rodin is a genuinely gifted sculptor, who created beauty when he did not yet think himself bound to work out of gratitude to the "young" journals. Unfortunately, it is extremely improbable that he will now find

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his way back to that simplicity and naturalness in which salvation is alone attainable. There is no return from Montmartre, not, at any rate, for an old man who has climbed this height and accepted with passionate earnestness all what he saw and heard there in advanced years. Young people who are still capable of change, in many cases awake from the idle dream of Montmartre æstheticism. Nature does not vouchsafe to the old to begin a new life.

XIV

## RESURRECTION

BARTHOLOMÉ<sup>1</sup>

I DO not want to speak of Tolstoi's novel, but of a work of art—great, at any rate, materially, as a statue—which every pilgrim to Paris will, I suppose, wish to see, viz., the monument which Bartholomé dedicated “To the Dead,” and which is to be seen in the cemetery of Père Lachaise.

It is interesting in so many aspects that one might devote to it a monograph as thick as a book, which would send out suckers over the whole domain of æsthetics and the history of art. Never do I feel so painfully the inadequacy of a short essay as when I proceed to handle a subject so rich in connections. It is impossible to exhaust it in this form, and it is painful to leave it as a fragment. One appears limited, whereas one is only restricted. We must satisfy ourselves with indications which will easily be looked upon as superficial, though they are merely terse. What is thought out as a proof takes the form of mere assertion, and in cases where we should like to convince, we must think

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ourselves successful, when we have incited the reader to kindly co-operation—which, however, goes for the most part its own way.

This pious ejaculation will make it easier for me to accommodate myself to the conditions which have been imposed on the short essay.

Works of sculpture in public places, which are neither monuments nor ornamental buildings, viz., such as are not intended to call to mind special events or particular individuals, are something novel in the development of high art. Antiquity knew only monumental creations which had their origin in patriotic sentiments. We have to bear in mind that religion in ancient communities constituted a part of patriotism, for there were no gods for mankind in general, but only gods for a particular people or a particular state. When Socrates had to drain the cup of hemlock, it was not because he had sinned against Olympus, but because he had given offence to Athens in the person of her tutelary divinities. The Battle of the Giants and the Frieze of the Parthenon, the Pallas Athene of the Acropolis and the Olympian Zeus, were felt, by those who gazed on them and for whom they had been wrought, as images from the past and present of their race. Even the “Laocoön” and the “Farnese Bull” were so regarded: a distinction between the legends of their race and accredited history, nay, between theology and politics, did not exist in the consciousness of the multitude at large, or even in

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that of the select few. The god made of ivory and gold was the public worship of a living being who was invested with high rank in the commonwealth, and the Olympian victor to whom a statue was erected entered into mythology as a comrade of Hercules, Theseus, and Perseus.

Religious art was the only public art known in the Middle Ages. If material political interests swayed the minds of communities in Pagan times, when the nations became Christian the supersensual, *i.e.*, the salvation of the soul, became the great concern of the individual as of the community. Patriotism disappeared from the domain of emotion ; what took its place—the pride of town, or class, or guild—was merely delight in material possession, or, if you like, a sort of vulgar dignity without any ideal background. Faith was their only sentiment, piety the artist's sole impulse from which genuine creations could spring. It followed, therefore, that religious art—the only monumental art then in existence—attached itself to sacred places, and subordinated itself to them as really mere accessory decoration. Without resting on architecture, sculpture stood on its own feet only in the Stations of the Cross on Calvaries, but, even in this case, it had no object of its own, but served a definite purpose of worship. The beginnings of a public art which grew out of an abstract thought of the community—one not of a religious but of a temporal, of civic nature—are scanty and dim. As forerunners of such an art we

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can claim the Roland Pillars of the Free Towns—the symbol of their civil and criminal jurisdiction—with their indistinct, historical background of dim memories of Charlemagne as the legal source of municipal liberties, and perhaps also the Byzantine Lion of Brunswick.

The Renaissance was the first to create a monumental art that was to serve no practical, religious, or dynastic purpose, but one purely æsthetic, from which people looked for no strengthening of ecclesiastical views, no increase of authority and, through that, of power in a prince or government, but looked, in fact, only for delight in beauty. Renaissance art, I admit, rich and free as its development was, also remained thoroughly under the influence of mediæval traditions, and knew no other range of themes than those derived from the Bible and Classic mythology. Even worldlings among the artists, who had outgrown religious ideas, drew at least their stories from the New and, even more commonly, from the Old Testament, or from pagan mythology, which was familiar only to the educated, and to the multitude at large was meaningless, and devoid of life. A scholastic pedantry hung about such works as Benvenuto Cellini's "Perseus," for instance, which prevented the masses from appreciating them fully. It was not, however, done from haughty disdain, for monumental art—the art of the streets and squares—appeals indeed to the masses. The modelling, on the one hand, of what is purely

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human, which appeals to feelings in every human heart, and is, therefore, understood by every man; on the other hand, of a subject, well-defined in time and place, which must be familiar, at any rate, to contemporaries and residents: this degree sculpture attained only gradually and late. The Goose-man of Nuremberg and the Brussels Mannikin are instances of local Realism; Tadda's "Justice" at Florence and Michael Angelo's "Pietà"—these in spite of their religious relations are examples of universal human Idealism. It is characteristic of the timidity of sculpture, even in its proud epoch of the Renaissance, that it dared not cast itself adrift from presenting what was of immediate utility. It thought it needed an excuse for stepping out into the market-place before all the people. It found it fairly in supplying towns with water. It created fountains. These are the first and, for a long time, the only monumental works which were suggested neither by religion nor by loyalty to some dynasty; which aim neither at immortalising the memory of a particular event, nor at refreshing the schoolboy knowledge of the more liberally educated, but embody, without any pre-possession, a purely artistic conception of form fulfilled and animated with subjective emotion. The stages of development of the monumental fountains, which pretend to be mere sports of untrammelled fancy on the artist's part, extend to the present day, in the latest phase, in which the fountain is not really intended to distribute

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water, like Sluter's "Fount of Moses" at Dijon, or Jean Goujon's "Fontaine des Innocents" in Paris, but uses the water only as a decorative element, as Donner's fountain in the market-place of Vienna, or Reinhold Begas's Neptune fountain in the Berlin Schlossplatz.

We must come down to the last century to find at last a monumental art of universal feelings or thoughts, still, for the most part, modestly cringing under the protection of architecture, as groups on pediments of palaces, theatres, and exhibition-buildings, and taking possession of the public square in full independence only in the last decades. Historical works, even of an universal, impersonal sort, such as the numerous war-memorials in Germany and France, the *risorgimento*-monuments of Italy, the patriotic battle-memories in Switzerland — do not come under consideration here, but only abstract works such as Bartholdi's "Freedom enlightening the World," at New York, or Dalou's "Republic as the Protector of Labour and Culture," in the Place de la Nation, at Paris.

Even these works still continue to show a birth-mark, which betrays their origin from the sculpture of purpose, for Bartholdi's gigantic statue is a lighthouse, and Dalou's "Triumph of the Republic" belongs to the fountain series.

On the other hand, Bartholomé's "Memorial to the Dead" is as free from every idea of commonplace utility as any mouldings for the rooms of a

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house. It originated in the artist's emotion, and had, at its birth, no other purpose than that of relieving its creator by the gratification of an impulse. What was to become of the work after it was finished is a question Bartholomé probably never asked himself at all. Perhaps he resigned himself to the thought that it would pass a pensioner's existence in some museum or other. In any case, carelessness as to what use would be made of it left him entire freedom as to the form it should take. And now he had the unexpected happiness of the work being purchased by the city of Paris, and placed in Père Lachaise. This has been the first instance, as far as I know, of a purely subjective, monumental work capturing a public position without this being justified by a practical service to the community, without embellishing a building, without satisfying any religious need or patriotic feeling, without immortalising any historical reminiscence, without glorifying any event or individual, but basing its claim to the grateful attention of the people at large only on the grounds that it attempts to embody in beauty an elemental emotion alive in the masses, that is to say, a real, common interest of moral order. The work may become the starting-point of a new monumental art, which will set itself the hitherto unknown task of presenting, with the authority of great sculpture, moods and views of the world, viz., the spiritual conditions common to a people, of interpreting them to that people, and of fixing them for history.

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With all its novelty, Bartholomé's work is, notwithstanding, not without organic connection with the historical development of art. There is no virgin-birth in art. Every work has a pedigree. Bartholomé's art is allied to the Campo Santo art of the Middle Ages, from which it borrows thoughts of consolation and promise. It nevertheless exhibits a daring progress when it has emancipated itself from the architecture of gateways, outer walls, chapels, etc., and forced its way in independent form, complete in itself.

The street of tombs opens at the main entrance of Père Lachaise, and leads to a gently rising hill, the declivity of which Bartholomé's masterpiece occupies. It displays the irregular, decorated side of a two-storied stone building of ancient Egyptian architecture of the simplest lines. A high door opens in the middle of the upper story, into the shadowy depth of which a naked man has entered. Him follows hesitatingly, with her outstretched right hand grasping his shoulder and seeking support, a young woman, the lines of whose profile, from her mouth distorted with fear down to the soles of her feet that detach themselves reluctantly from the ground, express a horror in presence of the unknown.

Towards this Gate of Death move, on the right and left, groups, each of seven persons, whom the artist has striven honestly, yet without real success, to fashion in various shapes. At the first hurried glance, the two processions appear to be variously

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moved ; but on looking more closely into them, we recognise an uniformity which proves a striking poverty of imagination. On the left, hard by the Gate of Fate, a young woman is sitting on a stone-bench without support, with her countenance concealed by her hands. She cannot make up her mind to rise from where she is resting, in order to take the last step. A second woman is visible in a similar irresolute attitude, in weak relief on the wall. Cowering behind the two, kneeling quite low, so that the thighs lie in parallel lines over the legs, a naked man seems to be whispering words of encouragement into the ear of the seated woman. Then follows a woman sunk on her knees as if crushed, who hides her face like the first with a somewhat different movement, and behind her a man standing, but bending down to her, and addressing words of consolation. Last of all, another woman sitting down, whose dishevelled hair is streaming over her countenance, and, behind her, a man standing upright, likewise as a consoler. Thus is repeated on this side the theme of the despairing woman and the calm, comforting man. On the right side the invention is somewhat richer. Close to the door stands an old man—decidedly the most expressive figure in the whole composition—clinging tightly to the door - posts ; and with his head and the upper portion of his body bent forward, he tries to get a terrified glance at the awful mystery, ere he pulls himself together for entering. To his group belongs a woman stretched on

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the ground with her face pressed in her hands before her; another folding her hands in prayer, and a half-grown girl shrugging her lean shoulders in terror. There follows a second group of three figures—a woman with dishevelled hair, bowed low to the ground; a crouching man supporting her and preventing the feeble figure from sinking down completely; and a young woman who kneels on one leg, turns her back to Death's portal, and glances back on life as though she still hoped for deliverance,

The lower story shows, through the front-wall, which is removed to its full extent, the interior of the vault into which the upper Gate of Death seems to lead down. On a mattress-like couch rest, side by side, the naked bodies of a man and his young spouse; across their bodies is laid their little one year old child; in the background is visible in low relief on the wall a winged angel with outstretched arms, who looks down lovingly on the three quiet sleepers. With a *naïvité* which does not rise above the puerile method of the *quattrocentisti*, of making their figures express themselves by means of legends issuing from their mouths, Bartholomé writes on this wall beneath the angel the sense of his allegory: "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

Above all, the artist deserves the respect that is due to long and earnest effort. We have here before us a work of ten years' labour, executed with composure, inspiration, and conscientiousness. He

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who can do that, of him one may say, without the slightest suggestion of irony: "With his talent, however applied, the man is certainly a character." Many details of the monument, nevertheless, prove that Bartholomé is not only a character, but also a man of talent. The husband and wife turn their quiet faces to each other in the rest that is in the grave, and lay their hands one upon the other; and this movement is so tender and sincere that it makes a deep impression. It really expresses in sculpture the love that endures beyond the grave. It is the solitary true emotion in the whole work; for he whose eyes grow moist at the sight of the dead child with the sweet little baby limbs, will say to himself that his *emoción* is not of an æsthetic nature, is not evoked by the means of art, but is the purely physical reaction of a human heart from a cruelly painful impression, in which no artistic element or inspiration is mingled. The woman who enters Death's portal a prey to horror exhibits graceful lines, and the old greybeard who timidly peers into it is cleverly conceived and accurately represented.

Beside these excellent details, many middling and absolute weak ones disturb us. The dead husband in the grave has an Aztec face of repulsive ugliness, which is not called for by any artistic considerations. The attitudes of many figures, especially those squatting or cowering, are in bad taste. A primary personage—the man who has stepped into the Gate of Death—stalks bending forward with head bowed

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down and the muscles of his back contracted, like one who is hauling with all his might. It is a matter of surprise that the tow-rope with which the vessel is dragged is not to be seen. I cannot prove it, but I am convinced that Bartholomé has formed this man, not after a model, but from what he recollects of a hauler by Constantin Meunier. I have already called attention to the monotony of the group *motifs*. The whole conception of the composition, at any rate of the upper story, is an echo of Canova's monument to Maria Christina at Vienna, with the further development that Bartholomé shows the subterrestrial and supernatural continuation of the theme which Canova carries only as far as the entrance to the realm of shades, leaving what follows to the pious belief of the spectator. The weightiest objection which must be made to the work as a whole is its offensive lack of repose. All the individual details are, with few happy exceptions, realistic, whilst the effect of the whole composition moves in extreme unreality. How has Bartholomé's most original artistic instinct not preserved him from trying to present a wholly ideal dogma with the most vulgar, petty realism? Simple mediæval sculptors might work thus. In our contemporaries we do not believe in simplicity, and therefore the discord between idea and form has a jarring effect.

The most ideal dogma that Bartholomé preaches is, however, that of the immortality of the soul

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and the resurrection of the body ; for his monument can mean only that, if it means anything at all. It is conceived as a consolation to the sorrow-laden who form the last escort to a dear one that is dead, or are making a pilgrimage to the grave of one they loved. And what consolation has he to offer them ? See, he says, in the figures on the upper story, the sorrow with which men approach the gates of shadow-land. Why this faint-heartedness ? Why this timorous shrinking from the terrors of death ? Death has no terrors. It is entering into peace and the fulfilment of a high promise. And he shows, in the lower story, the gentle, blessed rest the dead enjoy who there slumber until their resurrection, watched by their guardian angel, who awakes them at the appointed hour, and convey their immortal souls to their divine destination.

That is the cosmic view held by an artist on the threshold of the twentieth century. Holbein and his predecessors in painting the Dance of Death were men who believed in Christianity, but the only consolation that they offered mortals was this : Don't bewail your mortal lot, you share it with Pope and Emperor. The path from the Rationalism of this exhortation to the mysticism of Bartholomé's dogma is called by the decadents Progress.

The decadents are consistent when they call Bartholomé a modern, one of the most modern, and hail his work as the art of the future. It is logically on a line with the "progress" and

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“modernism” of a Huysmans, Maeterlinck, Bourget, and other New Catholics. But what is to be said about the city of Paris having this unctuous work erected in Père Lachaise? Had the Moscow Duma done it, everybody would have found it natural. But the Paris Municipal Council! This society of boasting freethinkers which has banished the Cross from the schools and churchyards, hounded the Sisters of Mercy from the hospitals, has the dogma of the Resurrection preached officially!

That is the highly interesting ethical side of this work. It reveals monumentally the confusion in the donkey-heads of the self-styled freethinkers. That they should decree the honour of a public site to a composition of a dogmatically religious character is proof of crass ignorance of their own standpoint, or else of their hypocrisy. I prefer to assume it to be their ignorance.

## XV

### JEAN CARRIÈS

THE little palace, the charming edifice which was already attractive as the abode of the Dutuit collection, has received a new value and consecration. A room has been opened in it, in which a great artist reveals himself, whose acquaintance, though not indeed quite exhaustively, but nevertheless very profoundly and familiarly, can be made only here in the wide world.. This artist is Jean Carriès, who died in 1894, at the early age of thirty-nine, after a marvellously planned life. To this pattern life, as expressive as any whose story Vasari has told, belonged a patron who kept what is vulgar away from him, who saved him from care and anxiety, who made his mind easy as to his influence on contemporaries and posterity, and, to a certain extent, symbolically personified his fame for him. This useful part was played by a certain Herr Hoentschel, who acquired most of Carriès's works. He has now presented them to the City of Paris, and, by so doing, rendered the opening of the

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Carriès Museum possible. In return his name has been engraved in letters of gold on the marble slab which declares the purpose to which the room has been assigned, beside that of his trusted artist—no mean satisfaction to a high-aiming ambition.

Carriès was the son of a poor artisan of Lyons. He seemed destined, as he thought, to follow his father's avocation; but the fairies had conferred gifts on the proletarian's child in his cradle: sense of beauty and power of design. He was for a short time apprenticed to an artisan; then he taught himself to be an artist. He pursued no beaten tracks, and could follow no guides. He was left to his own sense of locality for finding out a path, and he made wide *détours*, but, nevertheless, raised himself safely to the highest peaks. Phenomena delighted him as form and colour. His pleasurable sensations sufficed to impel him to utterance in sculpture and painting; he satisfied his delight in form by modelling in clay, his delight in colour by enamelling.

For nearly two decades he sought, strove, and created in solemn loneliness. Only the patron whom he luckily found at the right time glanced over his shoulders when at work with bated breath. His reverential admiration expressed itself in a convincing manner by the helpful gesture of the open hand. Some intimate comrades were allowed to witness the lofty drama of an exquisite development. His studio, however, was far removed from the noise of the

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market. The heat of praise and the icy breath of blame brought no disturbance into the even climate in which his talent was powerfully developing. Quiet and collected, he worked on until he saw his inner vision realised before him. Then he said: "It is good"; and allowed a great Sabbath to follow the hard days of creation. Absolutely unknown to wider circles, in 1892 he stepped before the public for the first time in the Champs de Mars with a rich exhibition. An hour after the doors of the "Salon" were open, he was famous. In the history of modern art, never before had such an impressive revelation been observed. There was no hesitation, no vacillation. Artists, critics, connoisseurs made pilgrimage, as if guided by the shepherds' star in the bodeful procession of the three kings of the East to Carriès' glass cases and pedestals, bent their knees, and brought incense and myrrh. His countrymen shouted for joy: "France has one great painter more." Thoughtful persons looked at one another and said softly: "The world is by one beauty richer."

All asked: "Who is the man?" for they insisted, in their amazement, that nobody knew him. And then they found out that Jean Carriès was a finished artist, a man of thirty-seven, who lived in the provinces, and had, up to that time, sought nothing but the satisfaction of himself. He had not wasted the tiniest little spark of his Promethean strength in the vulgar melodrama of fighting for success. His tragedies were the great struggle with

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the resistance of material, and doubt of himself, and they had been played in secret in his soul. And now was pressed upon him that for which candidates strive convulsively, and how often fruitlessly! The Champs de Mars Society elected him with acclamation to full membership, and dispensed him from the probationary period as associate. The State asked for specimens to serve as models for its museums, and tied the red ribbon to the buttonhole of his blouse. What was purchasable was bought up by the ladies of Arc de Triomphe quarter during the first days of the "Salon." A rich American lady, Mrs Winnaretta Singer, commissioned him to carry out the model of his fantastic "door." The artists fêted him by a banquet in his honour—a homage which at that time was not lavished as was the case afterwards. Mdlle. Luise Breslau painted his portrait, which is now exhibited in his room in the midst of his works, and showed his admirers a still youngish man of noble beauty, with a Lucius Verus head, the Cæsarean nobility of which was not in the least injured by a careless slouched hat. I do not know whether Mdlle. Breslau has flattered her model or has been honest, for I never saw Carriès himself; but in the picture he appears, as one would like to fancy him, every inch a gentleman, on whom his careless working-dress has the effect of a disguise which does not for a second deceive as to the rank of the wearer. A delicate, slender figure; wonderfully active, inspired hands; deep, searching eyes that

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seem to sight and fix a dream-picture hovering away ; soft, narrow cheeks, on which uneasy shadows play, under the short beard ; a thoughtful, white forehead over which an abundance of light brown curls falls. How many women may have indulged in dreams before this likeness, for it fascinates even men !

The homage received had no intoxicating effect on him ; the activity of the Press concerning him did not infect him with the smallest beginnings of conceit. He withdrew from the curiosity of the world by quietly returning to his provincial nest, where, day and night, he stoked his flaming furnace, and mixed his acids and metallic salts ; suffered under frequent disappointments, and enjoyed rare delights in the success of a firing or a coloured enamel. In the ensuing year one looked in vain for him in the "Salon," and not quite two years after his unparalleled triumph that came like a bomb, men learnt that he had died.

His life had ended artistically. Carriès disappeared ere his locks grew scanty or grey. Beautifully and noiselessly, like another Euphorion, he soared away from the admiration of his contemporaries in the full lustre of his fame ; and his works, through his early death, experienced the enhanced value of the Sibylline books. We may call him happy, for in this room we feel that he had given his best when he died. With a longer life he might have gone astray, for there is no lack of short openings to false paths. Very likely he

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would have repeated himself many times, and that would have detracted from the dainty charm of rarity which, besides their noble beauty, is peculiar to his works.

He unites in himself two different and equally perfect artists: the sculptor and the art-potter. Each tilled a tiny field; but with what intensity! And what harvests they conjured out of it! As sculptor, curiously enough, the whole human figure in its Olympian nudity failed to interest him. He has not on a single occasion sought to represent the body's Paradisaic beauty. He confines himself, apparently on principle, to head and hands; but these are surpassed by nothing, and equalled only by little, that all the centuries since the Renaissance have produced. I pass respectfully, yet without deeper feeling, by his busts of Velasquez and Franz Hals. They are merely exercises of his hand, perhaps only pastimes. They seem theatrical by reason of the accentuation of the costume. In their countenances the absence of the model is too evident. But beside them the busts of Gustave Courbet, of Jules Breton, especially of Carriès himself, operate with unequalled authority. They live before us; they think, and they reveal themselves. In looking at them we involuntarily call to mind the old stories of the earthen statues which a magician filled with the breath of life in order that they might serve him.

The same impression, only intensified and deepened, is felt before the busts of the "Young Girl with the

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Drooping Head," the "Dutch Wife," and the "Dutch Maiden." This young Dutch girl is particularly adorable. I do not consider I am exaggerating when I say she ranks as a sister, though in a different technique, with the "Mona Lisa." The maiden's innocent eyes, which have no presentiment of the passionate secrets of Gioconda; the graceful, reposeful countenance, that seems wondering blissfully over her own blooming youth and the loveliness of the world, charm us like the miracle of a spring day. Similar joy streams from his sleeping and waking little children. The softness of this baby flesh, the delicate texture of this plump, warm, satin skin, are unattainable. Carriès discovered a new technique for the life of the outer skin, the results of which, in his hands, are amazing. He gives a delicate, perpendicular creasing to the membrane of the lips, and marks it off from the skin of the face in a discreet but firm line, so that it imparts the illusion of seeing swelling lip-red framed in mother-of-pearl. The mouths of his women are weirdly seductive. It would really not surprise me if semi-fools and lunatics were to pounce upon these ravishing lips with eager kisses.

Even when Carriès is not idealising, but is reproducing portraits true to nature, he imparts to them an inwardness which seems unfathomable, like that of a deep soul. For this let any one only look at the "Bust of an Unknown Lady" and "Mother Callamand"—the former a cold, proud patrician,

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perhaps the Clara Vere de Vere, in whom Tennyson admires "that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere"; the latter a splendid old nun, probably an abbess, a sturdy, peasant woman who is conscious of her high rank in the convent, and in whose broad face goodness and severity, healthy power and enthusiastic spirituality, are mingled. This gift of filling the subject with inward life is the strongest element in Carriès' genius. In a series of works which were exhibited in the Champs de Mars Salon, and are, unfortunately, not to be found in the room of the Little Palace, this cropped up overpoweringly. There were fabulous animals, monsters, which a luxuriant imagination had invented—toads, frogs, lizards of gigantic size, in positions humanly conceived, the female reposing on the breast of the male, whose eyes are closing in rapture, and delicately embraced by his paws. One might think they would have a grotesque effect; by no means. Their anthropomorphism brought them in danger of derision; but the genius of Carriès was here directly revealed. The quasi-human, emotional life manifested in their attitudes made them pathetic. The toads' legs were not seen; their mouths and goggle eyes were not seen. People saw only the unmistakable trait of love, and were moved by this exhibition of the primitive feeling—the same in man and beast—which holds the world together.

Perhaps it is in accordance with this gift of spiritualisation that Carriès never worked with marble,

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rarely with bronze, but, as a rule, and preferably, with potter's clay. Stone and metal, however painfully correctly they render, with every stroke of the thumb and impression of the finger, the clay model, seem to him too hard for the inexpressible tenderness which he wants to express. Only one material satisfies him—the one which possesses the softness of flesh and of nerve-plasm. He can knead only clay so that it retains his lightest vibrations. There is something about his busts of burnt clay that reminds me of phonographic cylinders. There is soul-melody inscribed in them in invisible lines, and, set in our mood, they again begin to give forth sounds, and to repeat the mood of him who composed them.

The ability with trembling fingers to coax emotions into soft clay and to render them plastic seems to be something divine. It did not satisfy Carriès. Anybody else would have found the limits of his genius enviably wide; to him they appeared narrow, and he tried to pass beyond them. He wanted to create monumental pieces of sculpture, and he constructed his "Martyrdom of St Fidelis" and his astounding "Gate." The "Martyrdom" is a group, composed of the kneeling martyr in monastic habit and the executioner behind him, raising his armed fist to deal the murderous blow. In the details the artist is here, too, distinctly Carriès, *i.e.*, the executioner is of superb cruelty—a fine specimen of the family of brutalised legionaries

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or torturers who, in mediæval *relievi* of the Way of the Cross, scourge Christ at the pillar and nail Him to the Cross. Taken as a whole, the master's art is a failure; the group has no line. The drama cannot be seen from any side, that is, the gesture of the executioner, with its menace of death, and the countenance of the martyr who is awaiting his last trial, cannot be comprehended at once in a single glance.

If this group is weak, the "Gate" is a complete failure. He imagined a gateway with a depressed keel-arch top, divided by an intervening pillar into two gates. The pillars are covered with grotesque masks and mythical animals from top to bottom. The arch of the gate is formed by a dragon, in the gaping jaws of which stands a noble lady. The separate masks and monsters scintillate with spirit, fancy, and humour. In richness and variety of invention, and in depth of humour, I unhesitatingly place these heads far above Germain Pilon's Pont Neuf masks. The contrast, too, between the fearless maiden standing in the animal's jaws, full of quiet self-confidence, and the hideous beast, is of pregnant symbolism. The work is, nevertheless, an aberration, as a whole. The masks and monsters have no organic connection with the gate, either constructively, or in accordance with the meaning. They are simply stuck on. And the gateway itself is an insoluble riddle. Where should it lead to? To a lunatic asylum, a museum of caricatures, or a

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carnival ballroom? Or should it mean "the abstract door," the door pure and simple, without the purpose of an entrance into a building? The poor, great artist consecrated years of his life to this prodigy, and never saw that he had wasted them.

The decorator amused himself in devising unheard-of enamels. He modelled vessels of smooth, supple plant-forms—calabashes, melons, cucumbers, *mamillaria*-cactuses, bulging or fallen in, smoothly swelling, or warty and shrivelled, whimsically tinted like a thin copper-plate, wantonly hammered, or lumpy and swollen. And over these whimsicalities, which show an incredible mastery of the material, he poured glazes which look so fat and moist that they seem to flow still, viscous and languid. Many are purple, like half-curdled blood; others white and rich, like fresh cream; and others like coloured fruit juices; but many a time we think we see thick matter and brains in frightful discharges; and on some vases the enamel imitates the lichens which overrun the bark of trees in spots, grooves, and bands. And when Carriès has done enough with these glazes, which remind us of opalescent life-saps, he tries diversity in glazes of gold, silver, coral, and precious stones, which change his stoneware phials into splendid vessels from a treasury of the Thousand and One Nights.

As a sculptor in clay Jean Carriès stands as high as Della Robbia; in details—in forming lips and cheeks — far higher than the latter; and, as a

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decorator, no one can be compared with him, not even Bernhard de Palissy—to mention a name by which his rank may be estimated. Carriès is not a man of to-day, and fashion lies far below the height on which he works. The wretched æsthetic-babbling coteries of the period cannot get hold of him, or make use of him for the senseless but furiously bellowed catchwords peculiar to the polemics of the day. He is not a modernist, not a classic, not an impressionist; he is not this, he is not that, but, he is, quite simply, himself. He works up what he has learnt in his own person; he invents his own, and always gives himself. He creates from his own soul, without looking to right or left. In him there is no school, no tendency, and no straining, but only feeling, personality, and the service of beauty. Yet it is through these great artistic natures, which belong to no time, that the line of development in art proceeds, and not through the pitiful *homunculi*, whom Faust caricatures artificially engender in advertisement-retorts.

## XVI

# WORKS OF ART AND ART CRITICISMS

DURING the last years the relation of public opinion to works of art has been repeatedly discussed, and on each occasion with great warmth.

The discussion, in the main, is concerned with two questions which are independent even if they are connected with each other, viz.: Has the public a right to judge a work of art, or must it renounce its own opinion and simply bow before the verdict of specialists? Have not all, or, at any rate, many, works of art that have subsequently gained undisputed recognition by the world, been strongly opposed and rashly rejected on their first appearance in public?

In 1899 intellectual Berlin was excited about a pertinent question. Professor Franz Stuck, the Munich painter, had obtained a commission for a wall-painting for the German House of Parliament. When the artist sent in his sketch, there came a shriek of most unpleasant astonishment from the judging committee of the Reichstag, and a member,

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Dr Lieber, expressed in public session, in very strong language, his absolutely unmixed feelings in respect of the work.

The Munich friends of the insulted artist, to their credit, made common cause for him. They published an armour-clad protest, in which they characterised the members as "laymen unable to judge," and reproached them with impertinence because they "thought they understood everything better than learned specialists did."

I expressed my views then in the *Deutsche Revue* of this opposition between specialists and laymen in plastic art, and I ask permission to repeat here in brief the essential part of my arguments.

Who are the experts? From the general drift of the objection on the part of the Munich artists it was to be concluded that they must be the practising artists, the critics, perhaps also the professors of art-history. Let him who does not belong to these three sacrosanct categories steal weeping away from the confederation of experts. And even among the critics there is probably a selection to be made. The critic who praises the artist is to him undoubtedly an expert; the critic who blames him shows himself incontestably as a *bourgeois*, and in intelligence stands almost as low as a common University professor who does not teach art-history.

All this is foolish talk. In matters of art, if, indeed, any one can, only an individual—never a category—can lay claim to the rank of expert.

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Is, perhaps, the practising artist the expert? He is not so necessarily. There are people whose vocation in life, or, speaking more correctly, whose usual occupation, is painting, but whose painting is a continuous insult to art. One may be a professional painter, and yet a pitiful dauber, and commit such impudent sins against good taste that every non-expert must recognise this at the first glance, and be provoked at it. Or is the critic the expert? It would be a good joke to assert that.

Nearly every verdict on a work or an artist committed to paper by a professional critic is opposed by another verdict, also by a professional critic which says the exact contrary. Which of the two critics is an expert? Which of the two has a right to demand that people should bow before his verdict, because he habitually makes phrases about works of art in public? What proof of capacity do the papers as a rule demand of the *beaux esprits* to whom they entrust art criticism? He who has observed dozens of times how ambitious young newspaper-writers, on their first report of an opening of an Exhibition, or after forming a coffee-house acquaintance with an artist thirsting for advertisement, suddenly discover in their minds a gift for art criticism, and have subsequently cultivated this with brazen self-consciousness; he will feel highly amused when people try to crack up art-critics as experts, simply because they exercise this function. Even professors of the history of art, even directors of

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museums, are not, by reason of their office, experts in the sense of possessing very profound understanding of art. The academic study of art-history lays the chief stress on the facts belonging to the history of life and morals, which need have nothing in common with the understanding of art. One may make in archives the most beautiful discoveries for the biography of Leonardo, and not feel a single one of his pictures. And as regards superintendents of museums, it is possible to relate the funniest anecdotes about their fallibility, and oppose to them simple connoisseurs, also "non-experts," who have formed splendid private collections.

The truth is there are no experts in questions of art, as there are, perhaps, in questions of technique. Expert knowledge presupposes the existence of fixed rules, of a canon. There can be no talk of this in the fine arts. The only element of painting that, at least to a certain point—to the point where the individual conception and, with it, really artistic interest first begins—is under objective rules, is drawing, both from its figure as well as its perspective side. This element can be taught, learnt, and faithfully measured, for nature furnishes the scales. On the other hand, the colour element in painting is subject to absolutely no canon, but at best to subjective feeling, at worst to a fashion of the period. Every artificial colour is a convention; for, as I have argued more particularly in my studies of Sisley and Pissarro, none can truly reproduce

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the real colours of natural phenomena, and it is wholly a consequence of education and habit, when the polychrome of oil-painting or water-colour more easily excites in us the illusion of colouristic truth than the monochrome of the two-colour or of black and white art. One decade paints in dark, another in bright colours. One school likes powerful, another subdued harmonies of colour. Præ-Raphaelites imitate the tone of old frescoes and faded Gobelins. Puvis de Chavannes took the colour out of his pictures by a transparent white-wash, pale as the moon. Besnard, on the contrary, discharges fireworks, without caring in the least if the mad tumults of colour that he loved are possible or not in nature. Carrière envelops his figures in a dense mist. Cottet has, very recently, brought into fashion the black and dark shadings which go right back from Ribot and Prudhon to Velasquez and Ribera. Who is right? Who is wrong? Here everything is feeling, and consequently subjectivity. Of drawing, one can in all cases say (and by photography irrefutably prove), it is correct, or it is wrong. Colour does not admit of a similar verdict. All that can be said of it is: "I like it," or "I don't like it."

For beauty in art, in the present condition of the perception theory, the physiology and psychology of pleasurable feelings, there is no other standard than subjective feeling. This is dependent on the greater or the less sensitiveness of the nervous

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system, on its perceptivity of slight qualitative and quantitative differences in the excitation of the senses, and, therefore, on an essentially congenital constitution of the organism. The gift of receiving strong impressions from works of art can be developed by practice, by the frequent and attentive study of works of art of different kinds; but it cannot be attained artificially by any effort or any amount of study.

What, then, mean the expressions expert and layman, when applied to æsthetic verdicts? The classes of society, in which preponderating occupation with intellectual problems, continued through several generations, has refined the nervous system and rendered it more sensitive, produce, as a rule, individuals with a feeling for art. These live in large towns, in the centres of art life, they travel, and visit numerous collections, and thus their feeling for art is developed into a wide understanding of it, that studies works of art from the historical standpoint. These are the real experts, so far as there can be any talk of such in æsthetic questions. But these classes of society, these individuals are only to the very smallest extent painters or professional critics, *i.e.*, critics writing for the public. To wish to exclude them, on that account, from the expert class is ludicrous presumption of certain persons who, by their own authority, confer this title on themselves. The educated public—the intellectual élite—has not the least reason for allowing their

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opinion on works of art to be dictated to them by painters who may well be daubers or crack-brained fools, or by critics who may be ignorant phrase-mongers.

So much for the first question as to the fitness of the so-called layman for criticising works of art.

The second question, as to the changes in public opinion about certain works and their authors, is considerably more complex.

It is not to be gainsaid that such changes have occurred, but they are much rarer than those would like to make us believe who, from instances of pretended later conversions of originally rebellious taste on the part of contemporaries, hope to succeed in proving that the ugly is beautiful and the beautiful is ugly.

The names which were most often cited to prove the incompetency of contemporary judgment on works of art of modern tendency are most unfortunately chosen. Millet, Rousseau, and Corot were looked upon by their contemporaries as smearers and daubers; Manet was laughed to scorn, Böcklin pronounced a fool, his friends advised Hans Thoma to change his name, etc., etc. In order not to go to too great length I will now leave Thoma and Böcklin out of the discussion. But the others! That Rousseau and, especially, Corot passed for smearers and daubers among their contemporaries is simply not true; on the contrary, justice was at once done to them for their technique.

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Even their most unscrupulous opponents admitted that they were draughtsmen and colourists. What they were reproached with was only the alleged intellectual insignificance of their work. People remained under the influence of classical landscape with ancient buildings or ruins, and a decoration of ideal figures such as Poussin brought into fashion, and Claude Lorrain cultivated. A landscape without nymphs or shepherds in Arcadian dress, without temples or figures of Hermes, seemed empty, insignificant, ignoble. The majority had as yet no taste for the witchery of mood in wood and field. Why, Corot himself was not clear about what was new and determinative in his own art, for in some of his grandest pictures Dryads dance, beneath young-leaved trees immersed in the mists of spring-tide, the most correct sham-classic square dance. It was only in his last period that he renounced this ancient magic. Rousseau had broken away from tradition more resolutely, and was on that account less esteemed than Corot by contemporaries whose education had been perverted by precedent. But the worst that was said against the two did not go beyond the assertion that they were "vulgar."

The case of Manet is, of course, different. People have roughly disowned this painter; but it is absolutely false to talk about a change in popular opinion about him. Those who "laughed at" him thirty-five years ago, laugh at him in precisely the same way now. In my study of the Caillebotte

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room in the Luxembourg Museum I have alluded to the angry protest of Gérôme and Gustave Moreau against admitting the works of Manet and his friends into a State collection. If the laughers are not so numerous, and if their laughter is not so ringing as in the "Olympia" year, it is simply because the man is absolutely done with. Only a few stragglers still talk nonsense about Manet, men who have missed the connection of "the last train," and some grey-beards in their dotage—the barricade warriors of the "Salon"—who fancy they are still breathing the gunpowder smoke of 1863, and will keep up to the day of their death, which cannot be far off, the happy, exultant mood of the beer-evenings at the Café de Madrid. None among the pillars of young and living art recognises Manet as his ancestor. People know now that he was a discovery of Zola's. The sharp turn in the development of art in the last thirty years of the last century was inaugurated, not by him, but by others. Courbet introduced realism which has nowadays shrunk to nothing. Monet kindled "Free Light," and that was a very great service which, unfortunately, is also no longer fully acknowledged, for the latest race of Parisian painters again abandons joyful brightness and goes back to the gloomy, oppressive tones of "the 'fifties." Manet, however, found nothing and invented nothing, and he owes the noise that was, for a period, heard about him only to his relations with a devoted friend, who vindicated his own tendency by that of

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the painter, and said of him all the good which he thought of himself.

The change in taste from one generation to another is a general law which I proved in the *Neue Freie Presse* of 9th August 1896, and afterwards developed and established in the Florence *Rivista Moderna* (No. 3, of 1898, "*Le alternanze del gusto*"). I strongly believe in the prevalence of this law; but if particular cases are followed in detail, it is recognised that many an apparent change in the appreciation of a work or an artist rests on an illusion of the senses.

To return to the subject of Manet. An awful din arose at the first appearance of "Olympia." Friends and foes waged wild battle with each other. Each panted for the blood of the other. Twenty years later the picture that had been so hotly contested was hung in the State Museum, which roused fresh, but considerably weaker, opposition. Finally, however, no one any longer protested against its presence in the picture-gallery, and now a sophist might assert: "There, you see! The picture which was once laughed at is, thirty years afterwards, acknowledged as a classical work of art."

Gently! That is by no means proved. The fight has ceased only because it has become objectless. Who nowadays waxes warm against Manet? The man, you know, is dead, not only as a human being, but also as an artist. He no longer troubles any one. He no longer exercises any bad influence.

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He no longer even poisons popular taste, for it is sufficient to observe the visitors to the Luxembourg, to see that they pass by the "Olympia" with laughter, and shrugging of the shoulders, or else with astonishment and shakes of the head. If a belated corybant raises a shout of "Hail, Manet!" he is merrily allowed to shout. It is superfluous to shout him down, for nobody listens to him. The truth is that the taste for Manet is not in the least changed. People find the "Olympia" every whit as repulsive nowadays as it was thirty years ago; but they no longer say so with a loud voice and with the veins about their temples swollen, because, generally, people no longer stop before its mouldy ugliness.

If you examine very carefully, you will generally find that the various appraisements of particular works in a new generation do not originate from later generations regarding it differently than did contemporaries, but from their generally no longer viewing it with the same eyes. Let us only bear in mind always that the vast majority of mankind have no feeling of their own for artistic beauty. They act as if they had some feeling only because they know that a feeling for art is pronounced to be a mark of higher culture. We cannot rate too highly the part played in art idiocy by sham culture, pose, and self-deception—or, shall we say, more indulgently, by auto-suggestion? Honest confession of obtuseness to art is hardly found in any but the

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two poles of humanity — on the extreme summit and at the lowest antipode. A man must be either a rustic lout or an overtopping genius like Prince Bismarck, to confess that he can make nothing of the fine arts. The culture-Philistine never has this courage. He always pretends that he finds luxurious enjoyment in the contemplation of art. This culture-Philistine always repeats what has been said to him ; he admires where the Baedeker-star prescribes admiration. And he is, in many cases, not even dishonest. He persuades himself that he feels what he regards it as his duty as an educated man to feel ; and he really comes to feel it in the end, thanks to this self-persuasion. All the effects of art depend on suggestion, so far as they are not concerned with the most absolutely primitive and undifferentiated sensual excitations. On one who has a genuine feeling for art the work of art itself conveys the suggestion, which is followed by feelings of pleasure. On the average men, whose blunt nerves take no impression from the work of art itself, the Baedeker-star — the label — exercises this suggestion. If a work of art has once got the reputation of excellence, either because it deserves it, or because it acquired it from a dishonest, busy, bold, and swaggering clique, the next generation of Philistines in art does not test it further, but takes it as something accepted. The clique can then state triumphantly that the work they have

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puffed is a success. But has it on that account acquired real success?

The number of free, strong men is extremely small, who have the courage, desire, and ability to examine the veracity of traditional labels; but there is a frightful devastation every time that such an idol-destroyer and overthrower of altars breaks into the Temple of Renown, which is guarded by that dragon, the Good Old Way. People are then convinced about the quantity of plaster rubbish which has been smuggled into proximity with real marble and gold - and - ivory work in the semi-darkness of the sanctuary, and has enjoyed for hundreds, perhaps for thousands of years, the same veneration as the wonder - working revelations of genius.

But suppose we conceive in our mind's eye the extremely rare case in which a real masterpiece was misjudged at first, and, later on, was greeted with acclamations. In this case the question, as a rule, is not of lack of understanding, but of lack of sense of proportion. The contemporary age which blames, and the succeeding age which praises, are both right, *i.e.*, they do not praise and blame the same thing, and the divergent appraisement of the work is simply due to the fact that contemporaries like to dwell on the faults and overlook the excellencies, whilst latter generations neglect the faults and regard only the excellencies. The contemporaries were biassed in severity, their successors

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are biassed in indulgence. Ideal justice is not of this world. But faults remain faults even in the ages that come after, and excellencies, too, were excellencies even in the period of their origin ; and it is jugglery and forgery when people interpret the change in appraisement as if a later generation had admired as a merit that which an earlier generation had stigmatised as a fault. Just one example to illustrate these propositions : Millet is said to have passed for "a dauber and smearer." Now, his contemporaries who blamed him used no such harsh expression. They said only that Millet drew incorrectly and painted carelessly, and those with a real feeling for art notice exactly the same thing to-day, only they say it no longer, unless the question is expressly put to them. On the other hand, his contemporaries, too, noticed his deep moral earnestness, his warm human feeling, the touching simplicity of his style, which we prize so highly in Millet to-day. But they were not inclined to forgive him his defects in execution on account of these intellectual merits, whilst we take his weakness in form into the bargain on account of the feeling it contains. These weaknesses, however, are there to-day precisely as they were thirty years ago, and he who fails to see them is guilty of presumption if he passes a verdict on pictures.

Taking them altogether, the works and artists that were overvalued by contemporaries are far more numerous than those that were underestimated at

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the beginning. And even in the extremely few cases of the latter category, the injustice of contemporaries did not, as a rule, take the form of violent opposition, but that of indifference. Contemporaries did not gainsay their beauty; but it escaped their attention, because this was claimed by other fashions and styles. No work of plastic art that is nowadays accepted without dispute was rejected, when it appeared, with such anger as certain products of the "Secession" are at the present day.

That is natural. The conditions of art production were half a century ago absolutely different to what they are now. The artist gave his personality full scope, and sought to please only a few customers of rank, without troubling himself about the people at large. To-day he wants to excite a sensation at any price, and he looks, for this end, not into himself, but about himself. By creating he is not satisfying his impulse to give form and shape, but his hunger for success.

Vain *amour propre*, swaggering, conceited vanity and cunning "pushfulness" are the motives that far too often guide the artist's brush or chisel. The coarse vulgarity of the means corresponds with the coarse vulgarity of the motives and aims. One must make a sensation, and that is attained most easily by a rowdy rebellion against taste, truth, and healthy human intelligence. If he annoys his contemporaries, the ruthless advertiser finds his

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account more surely than if he praised them. Only he who startles dares hope to be noticed in our present huge exhibitions with their three thousand numbers. That is why the unscrupulous competitor works with the object of startling, and only with that object. His natural allies are writers who seek by aggressive criticism to satisfy the same hysterical impulse towards sensation as he, and the snobs who hope to justify their claim to be un-Philistine by pretending to discover and appreciate hidden beauties, where the thick-headed majority of their fellow-men observe and condemn only unblushing outrages on the sense of beauty.

The necessity for creating a sensation has arisen only in our times of over-production in all fields of intellectual creation, and of frightfully murderous competition for success. In the earlier days of art it played hardly any part at all. On this account it is fallacious to try to deduce from the, after all, extremely rare romances of works, originally mis-judged but afterwards recognised, in the past, an argument in favour of certain creations of the present day, which a large proportion of educated men rejects, not because they do not understand, them, but because they understand them only too well.

Let men only have the quiet courage not to allow themselves to be put out of countenance; they will carry their point even before posterity.

## XVII

### MY OWN OPINION

THERE is hardly anything which I hate so cordially as opportunistic criticism, which, in respect of phenomena in art-production presented in a noisy and pretentious way, affecting to signify modernity and progress, does not honestly take a side, but with the cunning foresight of the bat in the fable attempts to come to an understanding with both the opposing armies, of the birds and of the mice. Criticism that openly wears the uniform of a pronounced movement in art can be put up with. The enemy of the movement fights the criticism and the movement at the same time. It shares all the fates of its banner; it is in the danger, and it may be in the victory. If the movement for which it carries weapons succumbs, it gets the worst of it too, and experiences the treatment accorded to the vanquished. It has to lay down its weapons of criticism, falls into contempt, and has no longer the possibility of devastating art life, of perplexing artists, and oppressing those who enjoy art. Insufferable, on the other hand, are the

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clever, the unprejudiced, the eclectics, the smooth civil sneerers who praise, yet with faintness, who blame, yet with a saving clause, who carry in their lips such well-known and rather good phrases as : "Certainly, there is some exaggeration here, but the peculiar style is not to be misjudged": "It is certainly no finished creation, but the work, nevertheless, contains some promise": "This is not exactly a work, you know, which one could recommend for imitation, yet there is much to be learnt from it": "It is the new wine in Goethe's *Faust* that is acting so absurdly, but still perhaps it will yield a good vintage." These people who talk so sweetly are those who really poison the springs of public taste. Thanks to them, movements which ought to stand without the pale of the law enjoy a sort of equal justification, as it were, of the æsthetic, historico-artistic copyright. Their mask of benevolence, justice, and toleration gains them the confidence of the irresolute, who, left to their own feeling, would recognise, at once, in certain works, either a gross impropriety of the shameless sort, or an indubitable manifestation of insanity, yet through the cheap phrases of opportunistic critics, become doubtful of themselves and say: "If such sober-minded scholars as this and that critic constantly find something to recognise in this stuff, I am perhaps wrong to condemn it at once."

Moderate feelings are much more widespread than extreme feelings. They are the normal product

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of the nervous system in civilised men ; to the great majority of half-coloured, faded grey men subdued colours only are sympathetic ; violent and shrill colours may amuse it ; but, in its innermost being, it feels instinctively drawn only to the lukewarm ones. It believes them ; and on their information, on their irresponsible recommendation, gives to the most openly rascally art-firms the credit through which alone they can hold out for a while.

And these critical warpers of justice are not assailable. They always play an imposing part, and are always right. If an objectionable movement lasts—and there are aberrations which have held their ground for at least a generation—then they triumph modestly, for they have been among its first heralds and have “recognised at once the sound kernel in the first strange shell.” If the imbecility is as such patent to all, and disappears amidst the derisive laughter of the intelligent, they triumph again, only somewhat more self-consciously, for they have “not let themselves be dazzled by novelty, and have pointed out its weaknesses, and worked strenuously at its defeat.” Thus every adventure in art life, every campaign in criticism, be its issue what it may, increases their esteem ; and the longer they continue their course, which is so mischievous to the community, the more blindly the multitude yields to their leadership, and the greater devastation they are guilty of

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through their dishonourable exercise of their office of guardians in matters of art.

I well know how this opportunism in criticism arises. It is the result of the co-operation of the basest and most despicable intellectual qualities. I find its causes in the dull feeling for the beautiful which renders weak and indistinct all reactions from artistic influences, and suffers neither delight nor irritation to arise: in the cowardly fear of man and pitiful adulation, which aims at injuring no one and only thinks of keeping a retreat open for itself; finally in common vanity, which prefers to please a crowd of gaping boobies rather than the select few, and the flattering, though so cheap, reputation of being "very intellectual," to the responsibility of crude performance of duty. The favourite word by which the opportunistic critics compound with every artistic confidence trick is "development." If the clairvoyant monitor utters the cry of "decay and degeneracy," the opportunists reply, "buds of a new and splendid bloom." They love to appeal to the history of art. That is right. When the Masolinos and Masaccios sprang up, the last pupils of Gaddi and Orcagna whimpered, "Now there is an end of painting." But what was at an end was Byzantine art filled by Cimabue and Giotto with some fresh life, and what began was the ever glorious *Cinquecento*. And much nearer to us: when Delacroix emancipated himself from the colour rules of David's pupils, and broke out into a downright exultation of red and

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blue and purple; when Corot, Rousseau, and Dupré set homely nature viewed with lyric eyes in the place of Poussin's classic landscape degenerated into dial painting; then earnest voices likewise accused the innovators of digging the grave of art, and yet we know nowadays that Delacroix and Corot were by no means the wild anarchists which the Academicians held them to be, and that an uninterrupted line of development extends from David and Prudhon through Géricault to Delacroix, and from Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain through Joseph Vernet, and even through Watteau to Corot—a line which was unnoticed by contemporaries, yet one which we now see clearly. It is the dodge of an unscrupulous attorney to quote these examples when treating of the art of a Puvis de Chavannes, an Aman-Jean, the Prae-Raphaelites, *pointillistes*, *vermicellistes*, and *pipists*. There are sure marks of recognition by which the authorised can be distinguished from the unauthorised, the true from the false, development from retrogression, and buds from gall-nuts. A movement which, indeed, resolutely diverges from the taste dominant at a given time, though striving to approach nature, need not, but may, have a future; and he who does not suffer from stiffness in the joints will not, as a matter of course and on principle, refuse to follow it with benevolent curiosity. If, however, the new movement departs from nature, one may confidently say "it leads to nothing." If an independent method which strives after personal

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expression reveals itself in a revolutionary effort—however peculiarly, nay, perversely, it might impress—the intelligent man will not condemn, but wait to see if something living comes from the attempt. If the practised eye, however, recognises, in the peculiarity, either a cunning imitation or a cold-blooded, intentional oddity, then one may confidently pronounce the death sentence, for it contains in itself no germs whatever of development. The only two eternal sources of art are, and will be, feeling for nature and personality. Fidelity to nature and honesty produce living creations. Unnaturalness and affectation are marks of decay. He who ever holds fast to these simple dicta will hardly ever run the risk of mistaking a Will-o'-the-Wisp for a lighthouse, or what is morally, if not practically, a more serious error, of treading under foot an insignificant chrysalis with the living and beautiful butterfly it enshrines.

Even of the manifestations of insanity of crack-brained painters, of the hoaxes of tricky strugglers for success, and the whims of childishly immature and childishly careless people living from hand to mouth, who have sprung up in the last two or three decades, the good man's insinuating word of the "sound kernel," of the "tendencies, capable of development, to a new blossoming of art," has been spoken by the opportunistic of critics. Well, time has now given the answer to these verdicts, at any rate in regard to some of the movements for which

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those prophets so benevolently predicted a glorious future. Fifteen or twenty years ago we saw in the Paris Salon, beside the expressionless fabrications of the usual daubing artisans—the “Mother’s Joys,” the “Young Lady at her Toilet,” the “Oyster with Lemons,” which constitute the stock in trade of all exhibitions of pictures—only two formulae appear in hundreds of repetitions: the vulgarly realistic, after the style, let us say—to mention a particular name—of Bastien Lepage, that pupil of Cabanel who had degenerated into an apostle of Courbet; and the pseudo-idealistic, after the model of Puvis de Chavannes. Workmen with brutalised countenances and greasy blouses, and unearthly figures in antiquated landscapes of chalky paleness, disputed the visitor’s attention. A concreteness which did not spare us a single finger-nail in mourning, struggled for supremacy with a careless vagueness which styled itself “Abstraction” or “Synthesis,” and produced only questionably schematic types. Whole walls exhibited unbroken rows of pictures which reminded us of the spectral ballet of the dead nuns in “Robert the Devil.” Then we came to rooms where an unmixed company of rag-pickers, and night-men exercising their calling, of huzzies on the night-prowl, dung-carting stable-helps, and rascallions at loggerheads, were quite at home. One of these movements, *i.e.*, painting in faint colours, has hardly a representative left; the other

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—the art of vulgarity, meanness, and ugliness—only a dwindling few.

Here, then, we have two movements, to which “the intellectuals” have promised a future. One of them is as dead as a door-nail and buried, the other dying. He who did not let himself be cheated, or want to cheat others, could predict this outcome with certainty. Debased realism was a misunderstanding of the impulse towards truth displayed by the Manet School. This School held itself bound in conscience to record minutely even the unessential and the ugly accessories. Their limited imitators sought only that which was ugly and unessential in the world of phenomena. They thereby wandered far from the eternal aim of art—to excite an emotion by a work of art; for the mere imitation of a sight either actually indifferent or frankly repulsive can never excite an emotion. It was, therefore, easy to recognise that this tendency could not be lasting. The pseudo-idealism of Puvis de Chavannes showed the other infallible mark of morbidity, viz., impersonality and dishonesty. He tried, by an artificial bleaching of colours and a semi-transparent whitewash, to produce the effect of old and faded frescoes, in which their age of several hundred years is an element of æsthetic effect, by reason of the dim depiction of what is remote, dead and gone, and unknown; by reason of the longing they awake for what has for ever passed away and will never appear again. It was imitation; it was an attempt to

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deceive. It was not the honest revelation of personality, but its disguise in a strange, historical costume. That had no future, and it could not last.

What justified the primitive naturalism of the pioneers, the convinced fervent service of truth, this survives victoriously every change in fashion, and, in fact, is developing strongly further. True naturalism, which grows enthusiastic for the poetry of unpretentious sights, and was the logical development of Rousseau's return to nature, and of Greuze's village stories inspired by that return (the "Village Bride," the "Father's Curse," the "Son's Punishment," etc.), has held its ground. On the other hand, loathsome painting, which is naturalism run mad, has been finally conquered, and the spectral painting of Puvis is about to follow it into oblivion.

These much-extolled tendencies have, then, no future in them. They were not buds which were to develop into blossom and fruit. They were wild suckers in which a generation of artists fruitlessly squandered its best strength, and which are now withered and blown away by the wind.

And that, too, will be the lot of other aberrations which have not yet quite run their riotous course. That may be predicted with quiet confidence, without any being taught by the future of another.

A great philosophical doctrine is deducible from these facts. All development—including that of art, which is a part of nature and a part of human nature, and obeys the common laws of nature—all develop-

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ment is constant, and will be diverted from its logical course by no power. Its great procession always goes through a main street, and sudden turnings aside branch off only into blind alleys. Extreme forms have no stability; they remain individual monstrosities without issue. The strenuous life is always making efforts back towards the typical constitution of the species. In art this law may be found deplorable up to a certain point; for it is inimical to strong individualities, even to honest and justifiable ones, and favourable to the indifferent average, whilst in art the absolutely untypical individualities are full of charm. But, as things are, it is the iron law of development which no living thing can escape.

It is not easy to oppose successfully the opportunistic criticism which always professes to see, even in the maddest and silliest things, at any rate, "germs of artistic development"; but it is, nevertheless, a duty of subjective morality to do so. My verdict on many notabilities of fashion stands in sharp contrast to that which one generally hears and reads about them nowadays. He who does not suffer from the delusion of greatness, or a morbid temper of contradiction, feels a position of this kind painfully. I have earnestly and conscientiously tried whether my adversaries were justified in demanding that I, as an individual, should submit to their huge majority. Well, I cannot concede this right to them. In dozens of instances, I have too closely observed how

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the unanimity of contemporary opinion about an artist arises. It is enough for an artist to invent a whim and obstinately cling to it, without letting himself be put out by indifference, vexation, or scorn. Very soon some ass of a critic will come and explain this whim as an inspiration of genius. This he will do out of vanity, affectation of originality, or an itch for sensation. He will do it to give the impression that he is of more brilliant intellect than the common herd, and that he alone can appreciate a beauty which the Philistines stupidly pass by. If the humbug of a critic has some skill in coining phrases, a little perseverance, and a fairly sonorous pulpit, he will infallibly, in course of time, collect a congregation around him ; for it is easy to gain adherents to a chapel which one designates as a place of worship for the intellectual *élite*, men of fine feelings, and those gifted with understanding. Provided that this sham lasts only a few years, it must needs triumph over all opposition. A young generation grows up which takes it for granted. No one puts to the test what has come into his possession, but takes it as a matter of course. It attains iron permanence. What was a paradox yesterday has attained the rights of dogma to-day by mere lapse of time. Busy pens now vie in outbidding each other in the elegance and wittiness of the phrases with which they express the prescribed admiration for the great man. If an independent person steps forward, and shows the worthlessness of the puffed up celebrity, the devotees of the little

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chapel, which has grown into a great church, feel an honest indignation against the heretic. "How does this man dare to doubt, when we, who are certainly better and cleverer than he, piously believe." That is the history of every religion: when it is organised it becomes intolerant and endeavours to assert itself by means of violence. But, to the honour of mankind, there are, nevertheless, always independent spirits who will not let themselves be intimidated, and on whom authority does not impose. They test the dogma, and kick it away if it is not firmly based. The stake has not protected religion from these independent critics; still less can the Corybants of art-reporting guard a fashionable idol from them.

The right of criticising the views even of the most overwhelming majority must be maintained. A final proof in disputed questions regarding æsthetics is, I admit, not to be supplied. All artistic influence rests on suggestion. The work of art, itself and, originally, exercises the suggestion on a minority endowed with delicate sensibilities. On the great majority an opinion of others, delivered with firmness does so. The great majority of people admire one who is praised because it is suggested to them by his trumpeters that it is their duty to admire him. As a matter of fact, they feel the admiration, without being conscious that not the work of art has inspired them with it, but the enthusiastic gossip which they have read and heard about it. These people refuse to believe me when I tell them

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that they are admiring something which is an aberration. The prior suggestion prevents them from tolerating a fresh suggestion from me. No one, however, can contest this so far as he is quite certain only of his own feelings. In art, effect is an infallible criterion, even if of only subjective value. If a man feels definitely as regards certain pictures that they are valueless and unmeaning, he has a right to express it as strongly and honestly as he feels it, even if millions declare that they discover all kinds of loveliness and depth of meaning in them. One will perhaps fail to convince a single creature, and will, as likely as not, long remain a preacher in the wilderness. But perhaps not for ever. The inventors of a fashionable *culte*, whom their selfishness obliges to stand up for their own work, will not remain in arms for ever and live. Those who worship after them have not the same strong, effective grounds, the originator's vanity, for defending that *culte* desperately. The snobs who thronged to it because it was the singularity and they were the exceptions, necessarily abandon it as it becomes commonplace and they find themselves in a vulgar majority. Then the uninfluenced art-conscience again faces the work ; it becomes susceptible to the warning of him who was, up to then, "the one voice crying in the wilderness," and in a short time all lips murmur : "That was indeed a swindle."

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